SHĪ'ITE ISLĀM:
ORTHODOXY OR HETERODOXY?

Luis Alberto Vittor



Translated, Edited, and Annotated by

John Andrew Morrow

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to our Master Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi

(May Allah hasten his return)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Luis Alberto Vittor is a Professional Technical Support Person for Scientific Research at the Center for Research into the Philosophy and History of Religion (CIFHIRE) [Centro de Investigaciones en Filosofía e Historia de las Religiones] which forms part of the Department of Philosophy of the School of Graduate Studies at John F. Kennedy University of Argentina. He is a writer, research scholar, lecturer, cultural journalist, and translator. His areas of expertise include medieval literature, religious symbolism, and the philosophy of Eastern religions, particularly in relation to Islam, the Middle East, Asia, and the Far East. He has reading comprehension of classical and .Semitic languages

From ١٩٨٩ to the present, he has served as a Professional Technical Support Person for Scientific Research. He has collaborated on the Critical Spanish Edition Project of the Coptic Library of Nag Hammadi under the direction of Dr. Francisco García Bazán. This project is sponsored by the National Commission of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), an organism dependent on the Secretary of Science and Technology (SECYT) of the National Government of the Republic of Argentina. As part of his work as a Professional Technical Support Person for Scientific Research, he edits and reviews work in his areas of expertise, including graduate and post-graduate research projects. In his role as Professional Technical Support Person for Scientific Research, he has contributed to many different projects, including, Dr. John A. Morrow's Allah Lexicon Project at .Northern State University's Department of Modern Languages in South Dakota

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From ۱۹۸۹ to the present, Luis Alberto Vittor has been the Editorial Secretary for the academic journal Epimeleia: Revista sobre Estudios Tradicionales, the official organ of the CIFHIRE. He is also the Director of the Mulla Sadra Center for Islamic Research and Documentation (CEDIMS) and the Editorial Center for Digital Islamic Texts (CETEDI). These research centers function within the Department of Social and Political Studies in Africa and the Middle East with offices in the Universidad Católica Argentina de La Plata (Sede Bernal) as entity associated in investigation projects, translation and edition of traditional Islamic texts with the Center for Oriental Studies of the School of Letters of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the Universidad Nacional de Rosario (Santa Fe, Argentina) and the Department of Modern Languages at Northern State University in South Dakota .in the United States

As textbook editor, Luis Alberto Vittor has been also the Director of Collections of Fraterna Publishers of Buenos Aires from ۱۹۸۹-۱۹۹۱; Literary Director of the Cultural Supplement Letters and Ideas from ۱۹۹۰-۱۹۹۲; Director of the Journal of Oriental Studies, Atma-Jñana, from ۱۹۸۹-۱۹۹۲. As a cultural journalist he has published various articles and essays dealing with Islamic literature, thought, art, culture, and spirituality. As an author, he has published Simbolismo e iniciación en la poesía de Alberto Girri, [Symbolism and Initiation in the Poetry of Alberto Girri], Fraterna Publishers (Buenos Aires ۱۹۹۰) and El Islam Šhi'ita: Zortodoxia o heterodoxia? in digital format, prepared by the Biblioteca .Islámica Ahlul Bayt in Seville, Spain, in ۱۹۹۸

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His forthcoming books include: Los templarios y el Islam: milicia temporal y caballería espiritual (۲۰۰۶) and Arquitectura de luz y edificación espiritual: el simbolismo antrópico del Imam en el arte constructivo del Islam [Architecture of Light and Spiritual Edification: The Anthropic Symbolism of the Imam in the Constructive Art of Islam] (۲۰۰۷), both of which will be published by Editorial Sotabur in Soria, Spain. In collaboration with Dr. John A. Morrow and Barbara Castleton, Professor Vittor has completed the book Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon (۲۰۰۶) which is published by the Edwin Mellen Press. Along with Dr. .John A. Morrow, he is co-authoring the book Islamic Imagery

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Dr. John A. Morrow is an Assistant Professor of Modern Languages at Northern State University in the United States. He has an Honors B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of Toronto, and completed Post-Doctoral Studies in Arabic in Fez, Morocco and at the University of Utah's Middle East Center. A prolific, internationally recognized research scholar, his publications on literature, linguistics, and Islamic Studies have appeared in over a dozen countries. He is the author and editor of Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon .((Edwin Mellen Press, ۲۰۰۶

FOREWORD

Body and soul are the two components of human beings; one is the husk and the outer shell while the other is the kernel and an inner spirit. Both dimensions need nourishment as well as protection. Almighty God says, "[I swear] by the soul and Him who shaped it [perfectly], and then inspired it [the innate ability to understand] what is right and wrong for it! Indeed successful is he who purifies it and indeed failure is he who corrupts it." (۹۱:۷-۱۰) Each human being has the potential of soaring to the level higher than that of the angels and that top place in the pyramid of God's creation can only be reached by .developing one's spiritual dimension

Islam guides humans on both planes of their being: the ritual as well as the spiritual. The Prophet Muhammad instructed the people on simple matters of hygiene, such as cleanliness, wudu' and ghusl, as well as on loftier matters of spiritual ascension; he urged his followers to be physically strong to defend themselves in battle-fields and also .charted for them the heavenly path of spiritual wayfaring

After the death of the Prophet, regrettably the majority of Muslims were unable to combine the ritual and the spiritual dimensions in their religious life. They experimented with their faith in different ways: from the absolute freewill theory of Mu'tazilah to the disguised predetermination [kasb or iktisab, lit. "acquisition"] of Ash'ari, from literalism or "fundamentalism" of the Hanabilah to the esoteric explanations of the extremists, from indiscriminate adherence to hadith by the Malikis to the personal opinions [qiyyas] of Abu Hanifah. Eventually, the Sunni Muslims settled with the Ash'ari theology and the jurisprudence of their Four Imams. However, the lack of spirituality in this strand of Islam .gave rise to Sufism among the Sunnis

All along there was a minority which maintained, preserved, and spread the wholeness of Islamic teachings, and that was the Shi'ah strand of Islam headed by the Imams from the family of the Prophet, the ahl al-bayt. Shi'ism emerged as the natural product of Islam which combined within itself its ritual as well as the spiritual dimensions. It is a path whose theology, jurisprudence and spirituality flow from the same spring, the ahl al-bayt. And, therefore, you will observe that the Shi'ah very rarely felt the need to form distinct spiritual fraternities like the Sufis among the Sunnis. You will indeed find 'urafa' [scholars who specialize in gnosis] among the Shi'ah but not murshids [spiritual masters] as found .among the Sufis

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A Shi'i Muslim refers for all his religious guidance--from theology to jurisprudence, from ritual or spiritual--to the ahl al-bayt. Even if he just follows the rituals with understanding and comprehension, he will be led to the spiritual path. For example, a simple recitation of the Du'a' Kumayl, taught by Imam 'Ali, elevates a Shi'i from the basic level of worshiping God out of fear [khawf] to the level of worshiping God out of love [hubb]. And so there is no wonder when we see that almost all the Sufi fraternities trace their chain of masters .back to one or the other Imam of ahl al-bayt

In this background, it was indeed a pleasure to read and review the English translation of Professor Luis Alberto Vittor's Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy translated by Dr. John Andrew Morrow. The book has excellently captured the exoteric as well as the esoteric dimensions of Imamate. I am sure that readers will come to realize that while Sunnism is more a legalistic aspect of Islam and Sufism is more a spiritual, mystical dimension, Shi'ism is the true legacy of the complete Islam of the Prophet Muhammad .((peace be upon him and his progeny

May Almighty Allah bless the writer as well as the translator and commentator for their .worthwhile contribution towards the understanding of Shi'ah Islam

Jumada II ۱۴۲۷ / July ۲۰۰۶

Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

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COMMENDATORY PREFACE

Luis Alberto Vittor's Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy provides a privileged and sublime view into the core and essence of Shi'ism as well as the early history and development of Islam. Written for a Western audience, it restores Shi'ism to its rightful place as a fully fledged aspect of Islam, rather than as a rebellious offshoot which does not adhere to core Islamic beliefs and standards. In this task, the author's analysis of Islam and the meaning of sect and schism went the full distance in establishing Shi'ism's

complete legitimacy. Further, the author takes the reader back to the birth of Islam and the profound influence of the Prophet Muhammad to demonstrate the partnership he intended to create between the secular and spiritual lives of Muslims via the wilayah or guardianship of the correctly appointed Imam. While not a Muslim myself, I could sense the generations' long frustration of those who believed that the very trajectory of Islam .was altered by the ego/tradition driven actions of a few powerful men

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Analogy is perhaps the most eloquent means of describing what Shi'ah Muslims believe happened with the appointment of Abu Bakr, instead of 'Ali, to the Caliphate. If a rocket is intended to land on a certain lunar crater ٢٣٨,٨٥۶ miles from Earth, the calculations must be precise to a ten-thousandth of a fraction. Any slight variation will mean that not only will the space craft not land on the right spot, but it may miss the moon entirely. I believe that the Prophet Muhammad's designation of 'Ali as his successor was based on just such infinitesimal calculations; a complete knowledge of the Qur'an and its divine message as .well as a realization of human frailty

The appointment of 'Ali was meant to inhibit the incursion of human ego into the burgeoning acceptance of the Qur'anic message. When that did not occur, the human manifestation of Islam altered. The message and means remained pristine and perfect, but human interpretation was clouded by personal interests and a reluctance to release power. This volume offers a clear and rational look at events, ideas, and the essence of Muhammad's intentions. For believers and non-believers, it is an authoritative source of arguments rarely heard. As such, it is a gift to a more complete understanding of this .world-class religion and the place of Shi'ism within it

Jumada II ١۴٢٧ / July ٢٠٠۶

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

In ١٩٩۴, our friend and colleague Hector Manzolillo, a prolific professional translator, presented us with two volumes of the academic journal Epiemelia which contained the article "El Islam Šhi'ita: Zortodoxia o heterodoxia?" [Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy?]. He asked us to read the article and wondered whether we could translate it from Spanish into English. At the time we had recently completed our Honours B.A. in French and Spanish at the University of Toronto, and were starting graduate school. While we were impressed with the arguments made by the author Luis Alberto Vittor, and we appreciated the scholarly contribution of his work, we declined the request to

translate the article due to lack of time. We ensured Hector Manzolillo and Luis Alberto Vittor that I would translate the book at some time in the future.

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It was only in the summer of ٢٠٠۴ that we were able to devote my time to the translation of the article in question. We had completed our M.A. and Ph.D. in Spanish American Literature in ٢٠٠٠, and found a position as an Assistant Professor of Modern Languages at Park University in Kansas City in ٢٠٠١. It took us several years to get settled in, both academically and financially, before we could devote our time to translating the article. It was thus, in the summer of ٢٠٠۴, that we informed Luis Alberto Vittor, now a close friend and colleague, a spiritual advisor and academic mentor, that we were ready to get to .work

Due to the specialized nature of the work, we felt it necessary to add extensive notes to make it more accessible to non-experts. While a scholar of Islam, a Muslim philosopher or an intellectual might comprehend the allusions being made by the author, most of them would escape the average reader as many of his sentences could be a paragraph, many of his paragraphs could be a chapter, and many of his chapters could be a book. What was supposed to be a small summer project turned into a major two year endeavor as we found ourself continuously expounding upon his arguments to the point that the .article gradually turned into a full-fledged book

The final product, a critically annotated translation of Luis Alberto Vittor's Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy, was thus finally completed. Reviewed by several Islamic scholars, including Dr. Liyakat 'Ali Takim, Shaykh Feisal Morhell, Professor Hasan 'Abd al-'Ali Bize and Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, the book was embraced by Mr. Muhammad Taqi Ansariyan. As most academics who read the book have acknowledged, the value of the work resides in the fact that it is the first scholarly study to deal with Sunni-Shi'i polemics from an esoteric and metaphysical perspective while providing a general criticism of .Western Orientalism

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Luis Alberto Vittor's criticism of Western Orientalism is amply justified and is certainly not the first. As is well known, Edward Sa'id condemned Orientalism categorically, claiming that it served political ends. It is indeed correct that Orientalism was used to justify European imperialism in colonial times. It is equally correct that Orientalism is used to support American and Zionist interests in the Muslim world in contemporary times. While there is truth in Sa'id's statement, it remains an over-generalization. The mistakes made by some Orientalists are not necessarily malicious. Many merely have a limited view because they never release their own history when looking at another's. As Barbara ,Castleton explains

It should be remembered that people can only look at something from a perspective they have experienced. While de Toqueville managed a brilliant analysis of America after being here a mere six months, this is not the norm. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that he wrote as an observer. An Orientalist, Arabist or Islamicist, can never bring real veracity .and authenticity to a subject that they are merely observing

For some scholars, Islam is like an ocean which they explore from the shoreline. They can dip their toes in it, they can wade in it, and kick their legs up forcefully, but they never really learn to let go and swim in the sea. They never let go of the edge to feel the swirl of their topic ebbing and flowing all around them. Despite their shortcomings, many of these Orientalists have made contributions to the field of Islamic Studies. Others, however, are arrogant, insolent and openly hostile to the Muslim faith. These scholars have never approached the ocean of Islam. Rather than revel in its riches and drink from its pristine purity, they stand firmly on its shoreline, pouring pollutants into its waters, vainly seeking .to cloud its clarity

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While the English version of Luis Alberto's book is sure to be embraced by Shi'ite scholars and open-minded individuals, it might be criticized or conveniently ignored by some Western Orientalists who will allege a lack of objectivity on the part of the author. Ironically, they may accuse him of their own single greatest shortcoming: subjectivity. They might claim to see a mote in his eye while being blind to the beam that veils their own vision (Matthew ٧:٥). They might complain that the author is writing from a Shi'ite perspective and has not remained impartial, a rule which apparently only to Muslim scholars since most Christian scholars rarely detach themselves from their own religious and ideological points of view. In the worst of cases, Christian scholars do not even pretend to remove themselves from their own biases, prejudices, stereotypes, and other .professional vices

After calling into question his objectivity, this sector of Orientalists might move on to their second line of attack: Vittor's approach and methodology. Despite the author's expressed aim to present the Shi'ite position--in all of its esoteric and metaphysical dimensions--he might be criticized for writing from a religious perspective. To be succinct, this would be a polite way of saying he is subjective, biased, and partial. They might argue that the book is directed to English-speaking Muslims, rather than recognizing it as a scholarly work .aimed at an academic audience

If Luis Alberto Vittor had said that Shi'ite Islam was a Persian creation, that the Qur'an was the work of Muhammad which was copied from Jews and Christians, and that the corpora of prophetic traditions were mere legends, he would be embraced like a brother, cited incessantly, invited to conferences, given generous grants. Eventually he might even be appointed to a prestigious Chair of Islamic Studies or counsel the American President regarding policies in the Muslim world. While some Orientalists are eager to attack scholars who study Islam objectively, they rarely dare to criticize the pro-Christian .perspectives of some of their most distinguished colleagues

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Rather than dealing with concrete facts and responding with sound, solidly-based arguments, some Orientalists might dismiss the author's scholarship as subjective. These are the same scholars, however, who have shown little concern for the subjectivity of their own colleagues. It almost seems as if there was some sort of consensus that Islam must only be studied by non-Muslims. If this is the case, it is certainly a strange double-standard as most scholars of Judaism are Jewish, and most scholars of Christianity are .Christians, yet one rarely hears any of them being criticized for being biased

It does not require much effort to find Orientalists responsible for reductionist readings of the Islamic faith. Take, for example, the attitude of the Islamologist Félix María Pareja who argued that "Islam was the religion of the sword." If a Muslim academic said that Christianity was a religion of Crusades, Inquisitions, and genocide, Western scholars would never let their roar of outrage recede. God forbid if a Muslim academic dared to say that Judaism was the religion of Zionism, Jewish imperialism, Palestinian concentration camps, Deyr Yasin, Sabra and Shatila, as well as the mass expulsion of Muslims. The words of Father Pareja, however, are not denounced by Western religious scholars. On the contrary, they are cited, and passed from textbook to textbook without the author's objectivity being called into question. As a priest, he wrote from a Catholic ?perspective. Can he then be entirely objective

Rather than questioning the scholarship produced by Muslim scholars, Western Orientalists might consider criticizing the likes of Asín Palacios. Many Spanish Orientalists and Arabists now openly admit that he was slanted. Paradoxically, they continue to use his work as standard reference material despite his claims that Sufism was merely a Christianized form of Islam. If the thesis is wrong, the entire argument leading up to it is equally erroneous and needs to be discarded. The inconsistencies of Western philosophers are so widespread that Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont have spoken of "intellectual imposters" who rely on verbosity to cover their argumentative deficiencies. Unfortunately, there are some Western Orientalists who remain "slaves of old ideas," .unable to appreciate the value of works written with academic freedom

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Despite their allegations of subjectivity with regards to the author, Western Orientalists would be hard-pressed to present a concrete criticism of the present work as its content is objective and scientific, both methodologically and epistemologically. While the work may have its shortcomings--for example, focusing only on certain aspects of the topic due to limitations of time and space--this certainly does not invalidate the text as a whole. That would be like discarding an Armani suit because the sewing-lady overlooked a tiny detail in the lining. Finally, what some Orientalists will find the most annoying about the current work of Luis Alberto Vittor is that it is a scientific study completed within the .framework of the Islamic faith, without succumbing to bias or attempts to proselytize

While their criticism may seem harsh to some, scholars like Edward Sa'id, Ahmad Ghorab, and Luis Alberto Vittor, are neither "assassins of Orientalists" nor propagandists for the Islamist cause. They are not out to destroy Western Orientalism nor do they have any missionary agenda. On the contrary, their comprehensive criticism addresses important methodological mistakes. It is a call for true scholarship, at the service of science, rather than political and economic ambitions. For Edward Sa'id, Ahmad Ghorab, and Luis Alberto Vittor, Orientalism should be a means of rapprochement, a means of knowing others, not turning them into alter-egos, not demonizing them, not exoticizing them, not eroticizing .them, and certainly not undermining them

According to Sa'id, Ghorab, and Vittor, certain subjects are sacred, and while they can be studied scientifically and critically, this must always be done with an attitude of respect and tolerance. Whether it is Hinduism, Taoism or Buddhism, whether it is Judaism, Christianity or Islam, all religious traditions merit to be studied without being slighted, tarnished, or disrespected. This applies equally to any discussions of Shi'ite Islam which, due to Orientalist opinion, has been stigmatized as sectarian. Showing a blatant disregard for etymology, many Orientalists have equated Shi'ism with the schism, claiming that the very word shi'ah signifies "sect" when it merely means "followers." This misrepresentation of the Arabic language and Islamic reality was opposed by J. Spencer :Trimingham almost forty years ago when he explained that

In Western thought, a 'sect' is regarded as a group which has broken away from the parent religious community because of differing views. On such criteria Shi'ism is not a sect in its origins, since it springs directly from the main stream of Islamic development, which branched into two streams, following different interpretations, hardening into (doctrines, about the origins and ordering of Islamic society. (۷۹

Clearly, Islam is not composed of a single Sunni stream, from which heretical sects flow out as rivulets, drying out in the sands of infidelity and heresy rather than reaching the sea of eternity. If anything, Islam is an eternal tree. Its roots are the pillars of Islam; its trunk is the shari'ah; its branches are its interpretations; and the fleeting leaves are its followers, coming and going with each revisited season. The dialogue between Shi'ism .and Sunnism, however, has been far less poetic, ecumenical and fraternal

As experts in the field are aware, the debate between Sunnism and Shi'ism has provided a large body of polemical literature. The Shi'ite scholarship on the subject tends to be characterized by a scholarly approach. The Sunni and most particularly Salafi work, however, tends to be characterized by an attitude which is both divisive and destructive. In the best of cases, the authors are misinformed and misrepresent the teachings of Twelve Imam Shi'ite Islam. In the worst of cases, they lance allegations against Shi'ites based on dubious documents, fabrications and fantasy, in order to accuse them of heresy. The classical Sunni heresiographers and polemicists include Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (d. ۹۳۵-۶), Abu al-Mudaffar al-Isfara'ini (d. ۱۰۷۸-۹), Abu al-Qasim 'Abd al-Wahid b. Ahmad al-Kirmani (d. before ۱۱۳۱), Shahrastani (d. ۱۱۳۵) and Mu'i al-Din Mizra Makhdum (d. .(۱۵۸۷

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More modern authors include Ahmad b. Zayni Dahlan (d. ۱۸۸۶), a Shafi'i mufti from Makkah, and Musa Jar Allah (d. ۱۹۴۹). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Salafis, rather than Sunnis, have been at the forefront in producing polemical anti-Shi'ite tracts. The most notorious of these authors include Ahmad al-Afghani, Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Nadvi, Abu Aminah Bilal Philips, Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman Dimashqui, Shaykh Yahya Silmi al-Saylani, and Shaykh Faisal. Some of these people, like Bilal Philips, a Canadian convert of Jamaican origin, have been supported by the Saudi establishment and represent the pro-Saudi Salafis. Others, like Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Faisal, a Jamaican convert formerly known as Trevor William Forrest, represent the anti-Saudi Salafis. Shaykh Faisal is presently in prison in the U.K, convicted to a nine year term in ۲۰۰۳ for incitement to murder. In his defense, he explained that the teachings he was given were "in accordance with the same at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in Saudi .(Arabia" and that "all my teachings are from the Koran and Saudi Arabia" (Gillan

To accuse Shi'ite Muslims of "heresy," as many Salafis do, is to play judge and executioner. It is well-known among Muslims that Islamic Law prescribes the death penalty for heretics and apostates. Of course, not all authors are so subtle as to call Shi'ites heretics and then drop the issue. There are those like Ahmed Shah Mass'oud from the Afghan Mujahidin and Northern Alliance, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, founder of the Hezb-i Islami, Mulla 'Omar from the Taliban, and Osama ben Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and the recently deceased Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi from al-Qa'idah, who have openly advocated murder, declaring Shi'ites to be worse than infidels, and claiming their blood was halal. Books like Talbees Iblees, [The Devil's Deception of the Shi'ites], extremist websites, and anti-Shi'ite pamphlets are often all it takes to incite ignorant fanatics to vigilante violence. The massacres of Shi'ite Muslims in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq are partly the result of anti-Shi'ah propaganda. The individuals responsible for encouraging and committing .these atrocities are true terrorists with innocent blood on their hands

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In many Western nations, like Canada, there are laws against hate literature. It is time for all supporters of human rights to demand their application, put a halt to anti-Shi‘i hate propaganda, prohibit its dissemination, press for the prosecution of those who produce it, distribute it and profit from it. If Canada, the United States and other nations can ban David Irving, the Holocaust revisionist, from entering their countries, then surely they can .ban extremist Salafis

In the past fifty years, the ruling family and government of Saudi Arabia has indoctrinated millions of Muslims into the Wahhabi ideology through its Islamic universities at home and affiliated institutions abroad; through its publishing houses; and through its network of Islamic organizations, mosques and associations. The vast majority of mosques in North America are controlled by ISNA, the Islamic Society of North America, which is the “official organ” of Saudi Salafism in the Western World. Frank Gaffney, founder and president of the Center for Security Policy in Washington and former Assistant Secretary of Defense :for International Security Policy under President Ronald Reagan, reveals that

T]he Islamic Society of North America is a front for the promotion of Saudi Arabia’s] Wahhabi political, doctrinal and theological infrastructure in the United States and Canada. Established by the Saudi-funded Muslim Students Association, ISNA has for years sought to marginalize leaders of the Muslim faith who do not support the Wahhabists’ strain of Islamofascism, and, through sponsorship of propaganda and .mosques, is pursuing a strategic goal of eventually dominating Islam in America

ISNA provides indoctrination materials to about ۱,۱۰۰ of an estimated ۲,۵۰۰ mosques in the North American continent. Through its affiliate, the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT)-- a Saudi government-based organization created to fund Islamist enterprises in North America--it reportedly holds the mortgages of between ۵۰-۷۹ percent of those mosques. Through this device, ISNA exerts ideological as well as theological influence over what is .preached and taught in these institutions and schools

Saudi oil money has spread Salafism to such an extent that, for a great part, Sunnism has morphed into Salafism. The “Muslim fundamentalist” menace has now hit home and Saudi Arabia is facing the return of their prodigal sons. Surely, Saudi dollars would best be spent delivering humanitarian aid to Muslim countries, supporting economic development and .encouraging Islamic unity, rather than encouraging Islamic extremism

On Dec. ۷-۸, ۲۰۰۵, a symbolic step towards Islamic unity was taken with the “Makkah al-Mukarramah Declaration” of the Third Session of the Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference in which member states, including Saudi Arabia, reaffirmed their “unwavering rejection of terrorism, and all forms of extremism and violence.” As Saudi King ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz declared: “Islamic unity would not be reached through bloodshed as claimed by the deviants” (“Moderation and Tolerance Urged at OIC Summit: Stress on Combating Extremism,” The Dawn, Dec. ۸, ۲۰۰۵: Internet: .(http://۶۶.۲۰۱.۱۲۲.۲۲۶/۲۰۰۵/۱۲/۰۸/top۱.htm

Considering the rise of sectarian violence in Iraq and the threat it poses to the entire region, Saudi Arabia may be reassessing its state-sponsored Salafism and deciding to work towards Islamic unity. As Dr. Kalim Siddiqi, Zaffar Bangash, Shaykh Ahmad Deedat, Imam Muhammad al-Asi, Imam ‘Abdul-‘Alim Musa, Amir ‘Abdul Malik ‘Ali, Yusuf Estes and other mainstream Sunni Muslims have impressed, the fundamental beliefs which Muslims have in common far outweighs the historical differences which emerged after the passing .of the Prophet

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Regardless of whether they are Sunni, Shi'i or Sufi, regardless of the school of jurisprudence they follow, Muslims are Muslims first and foremost and should pose a united, non-sectarian front when confronting the enemies of Islam. Opinions regarding the succession of the Prophet and interpretations of Islamic law are primarily personal convictions belonging in the private domain. They can be addressed in the proper academic context, to increase knowledge, and to develop an appreciation for the various expressions of the Islamic faith. There is no place, however, for divisive argumentation in .Islam

In contrast to the Sunni side, where calls for unity remain voices in the wilderness, the Shi'ite side has a long history of scholarship with a fraternal foundation. With rare exception, it has been the general consensus of Shi'ite scholars that the followers of ahl al-sunnah are bona fide believers; the only heretics being the Kharijites, the earliest Islamic sect which traces its beginning to a religio-political controversy over the Caliphate and which holds that 'Ali and his followers became infidels; the nawasib, those who .profess hatred towards the Prophet's Family and the ghulat, the extremists who deify 'Ali

Among the first Shi'ite scholars to formulate the fundamentals of faith of the Twelver Shi'ites from a polemicist perspective was Shaykh Sadduq, one of the scholarly pillars of Shi'ism, in his famous I'tiqadat, translated loosely as A Shi'ite Creed. He lived during intolerant times, a period of rampant takfir [or accusations of infidelity] when tensions ran high between the various schools of thought in Islam, each one vying for supremacy. Although he was a deeply-committed Shi'ite, he was forthcoming in presenting Shi'ite .beliefs clearly and concisely in comparison with other currents in Islamic thought

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Shaykh Sadduq's I'tiqadat was commented upon by one of his students, Shaykh al-Mufid, under the title of Sharh 'aqa'id al-Sadduq, which remains a popular theological text to this date. Numerous other Shi'ite scholars wrote valuable books in which they contrasted Sunni and Shi'i beliefs, including Shaykh Abu Ja'far al-Tusi (d. ١٠۶٧-٨) and 'Abd al-Jalil al-Qazwini (d. c. ١١٩٠), who put forth some strickingly moderate view, as well as 'Allamah al-.(Hilli (d. ١٣٢۵

In the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the leading figures of inter-Islamic ecumenism have included Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-Ghita, Ayatullah Muhammad Husayn Burujerdi--who worked to unite the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence--'Allamah Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, Ayatullah Shariatmadari, Ayatullah Hasan al-Shirazi, Imam Musa al-Sadr and Ayatullah Marashi-Najafi--who had the unique distinction of having ijazah [permission] of riwayah [to teach Islam] from nearly ۴٠٠ Shi'i, Sunni and Zaydi scholars--as well as Ayatullahs Beheshti, Muntazeri, .Mutahhari, among many others, all of whom defended the cause of Muslim unity

In recent years, Ayatullah al-Udma Sayyid 'Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani, has repeatedly called for calm between both communities in the most trying of circumstances. The greatest advocate of Islamic unity in recent history was none other that Imam Khumayni. In fact, :the late founder of the Islamic Republic ruled that

Muslims should be awake, Muslims should be alert that if a dispute takes place among Sunni and Shi'ite brothers, it is harmful to all of us; it is harmful to all Muslims. Those who want to sow discord are neither Sunni nor Shi'ite, they are agents of the superpowers and work for them. Those who attempt to cause discord among our Sunni and Shi'ite brothers are people who conspire for the enemies of Islam and want the enemies of Islam to triumph over Muslims. Muslim brothers and sisters will not be segregated by the pseudo-propaganda sponsored by corrupt elements. The source of this matter--that Shi'ites should be on one side and Sunni on the other--is on the one hand ignorance and, on the .other hand, foreign propaganda

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If Islamic brotherhood comes to the fore among Islamic countries, they will become such a great power that none of the global powers will be able to contend with them. Shi‘ite and Sunni brothers should avoid every kind of dispute. Today, discord among us will only benefit those who follow neither Shi‘ah nor Hanafi. They neither want this nor that to exist, and know the way to sow dispute between you and us. We must pay attention that we are all Muslims and we all believe in the Qur’an; we all believe in tawhid and must .work to serve the Qur’an and tawhid

This message of Islamic unity is one that all Muslims, be they Sunni, Shi‘i, or Sufi, should remember, as many of them seem to have forgotten it. While Imam Khumayni worked tirelessly towards Islamic unity, some Shi‘ite scholars have failed to follow in his footsteps and have promoted proselytism and sectarianism, rather than Islamic pluralism. Fortunately, for those interested in Islamic unity within diversity, there exists an excellent .body of literature

While there are many excellent books on Sunni-Shi‘ah dialogue, perhaps the finest work of scholarship on the subject was produced by the Lebanese erudite ‘Abd al-Husayn Sharif al-Din al-Musawi in his legendary Muraja‘at or The Evidence, a discussion by correspondence which took place between the Shi‘ite sage and his Sunni counterpart, Shaykh Shaltut, the Dean of the University of al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt. In fact, the debate was so productive in increasing Sunni-Shi‘ite understanding that it resulted in Shaykh Shaltut issuing a historic fatwa recognizing the Ja‘fari Ithna ‘Ashari madhhab as a legitimate school of jurisprudence in Islam which all Muslims are permitted to follow freely. The work is a model of the proper Muslim mores which are to be observed in any .and all debates

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Another well-known polemical work is Peshawar Nights. While claims have been made that the book is of dubious origin, perhaps produced for propaganda purposes as part of Shi'ite missionary activities, this does not debilitate the arguments it contains. In recent years, the Tunisian Muhammad al-Tijani, has written several valuable books including Then I was Guided, The Shi'ah: The True Followers of the Sunnah, Ask Those Who Know, and With the Truthful, all of which have been translated into numerous languages. On the positive side, these books present a wealth of information and documentation supporting Shi'ism and have served to bring many Sunnis closer to and even into Shi'ism. On the negative side, the author is neither an academic nor a traditional scholar of Islam, as he readily admits. As a result, his books are not always free from error, contradiction, value .judgments, and unbridled enthusiasm

At times, his arguments are expressed in terms which seem abrasive to some Sunnis, sometimes accentuating division rather than attenuating it. This applies even more to websites like answering-ansar.org and certain articles published on shianews.com. While both of these websites are informative, they fight fire with fire when they should be fighting fire with water. In the Preface of Devil's Deception of the Nasibi Wahhabis which appears on answering-ansar.org, 'Abdul Hakeem Orano clearly explains that "This book takes the method of attack." Evidently, this is an inappropriate approach. As Almighty Allah instructs, "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, .(who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance" (۱۶:۱۲۵

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As can be observed from the previous survey, the most serious shortcoming of scholarship in the area of Shi'ite-Sunni dialogue is that it centers on the exoteric aspects of the religion. It deals with concrete, down to earth doctrines, as opposed to matters of spirituality, mysticism and metaphysics. The present study, Luis Alberto Vittor's Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy takes the debate between Shi'ism and Sunnism to a higher plateau elevating arguments to the spiritual sphere in his profound philosophical .tract

In closing, we would like to thank Professor Luis Alberto Vittor for trusting us with this translation. We have remained as faithful to the text as possible and attempted to render it into a scholarly yet idiomatic English. We would like to thank Mr. Abu Dharr Manzolillo, a true friend and father figure, who has stood by our side for almost two decades. We would like to thank all the scholars who bestowed their knowledge upon us, from Mawlanas Baqri and Rizvi in Canada to the Grand Ayatullahs in Qum and Najaf. We would like to thank our wife, Rachida Bejja, for repeatedly reviewing, correcting, and editing the Arabic transliteration, as well as our son, Yasin al-Amin Morrow, both of whom served as a constant source of solace. We would like to thank NASIMCO, the North American Shi'a Ithna-'Ashari Muslim Communities for offering to sponsor and distribute this book. In particular we extend our gratitude to Mr. Hussein Walji, President of NASIMCO, and .Dr.Shiraz Datoo, who serves as Director

We would also like to send a special thanks to Mr. Muhammad Taqi Ansariyan for graciously supporting this scholarly endeavor and commend him for his inestimable contributions to the fielf of Shi'ite studies through the publication and distribution of academic titles. We hope and pray that the following translation will be a welcomed contribution to scholarship in the field of Islamic Studies, will benefit both scholars and students of Islam, serve as a wake-up call to Western Orientalists, and bring about a greater degree of understanding and appreciation for the unity within the diversity of Islamic orthodoxy. Finally, as the translator and editor of the the following work, we accept full responsibility for its content and commit ourselves to correcting any .shortcomings that it may contain in future editions

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

The present book is the first English edition of an article which was published in an academic journal in ۱۹۹۴ under the name "El Islam Ši'ita: Zortodoxia o heterodoxia?" [Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy?]. The article was well-received in academic circles and was soon widely circulated on various Islamic sites on the Internet thanks to a digital edition published by the Biblioteca Islámica Ahlul Bayt in Sevilla, Spain. Thereafter, in the year ۲۰۰۰, the article was published in three parts in Az-Zaqalain, a Spanish .language academic journal published in Qum, Iran

In response to the interest received by the article, Dr. John A. Morrow decided to translate it, edit it, and turn it into a book. As often occurs in such cases, the challenge of turning an article into a book relates to its amplification. Dr. Morrow resolved this problem by including an exhaustive amount of notes and bibliographical information from Arabic and Persian sources which, due to their quantity and quality, should be seen as a notable .contribution to the original work of the author

For all intents and purposes, this book constitutes a slightly modified version of that article originally published in Epimelia: Revista de Estudios Sobre La Tradición. The journal in question is the official academic organ of the Center for Research into the Philosophy and History of Religion (CIFHIRE) [Centro de Investigaciones en Filosofía e Historia de Las Religiones] of the Department of Philosophy of the School of Graduate Studies at John F. Kennedy University of Argentina. The book, in its present form, contains nothing new with the exception of the valuable critical and biographical notes, the translator's preface, and .the detailed index, provided by Dr. Morrow

It also contains a prologue by the author and an appendix in which we further expound upon our criticism of Orientalism, from the point of view of the philosophy of the history of religion, to the broader field of social studies. Besides these addendums, we have not modified the original text in any substantial fashion for obvious reasons. For starters, it would be impossible to alter the sentences without changing their original intent. Furthermore, any such changes might arouse suspicion, leading some readers to believe that they were done for editorial reasons. And finally, one of the main reasons for not making any changes, save those slight details brought to our attention by those who reviewed the original Spanish version or its English translation, is that the work was .written with great haste in the space of two months

It was produced with the specific purpose of responding to endless allegations of Orientalists who, unsatisfied with characterizing Shi'ism as a fundamentalist form of Islam, stubbornly insisted on labeling it as a heterodox sect. By doing so, these scholars were merely echoing old Orientalist prejudices and supporting Muslim reformists. This reformist sector was quickly embraced by Western Orientalists as proponents of "moderate" Islam" while the traditional sector was labeled as representatives of "extremist Islam," dangerous "fundamentalists" who make militant and violent .interpretations of faith based on the Qur'an

The purpose of the original study, which has now been converted into a book, was to address this conceptual error which is incessantly repeated, ad nauseam, in academic circles and which passes from textbook to textbook. However, when the time came to review the book for publication, we felt much less optimistic with regards to our goal of conveying to Western readers that Shi'ite Islam is not an extreme, heterodox, fundamentalist or fanatical sect. Evidently, we never pretended to provide a definitive ."solution" to such a complex problem

Any such effort would require broader and more detailed studies. We acknowledge that many of the issues related to the topic remained outside the scope of our study. Although we are most conscious of the gaps in our study, we would never even dream of trying to fill them in the space of this exposition. Such exclusion is the understandable result of the need to assume a determined perspective, forcing us to be selective in our choice of the .material covered

In order to avoid confusing or misleading our readers, we must point out that we never proposed to write an introduction to Shi'ite Islam. This book does not study certain aspects which are crucial in the understanding of the political and metaphysical thought of Twelver Shi'ism. It may touch upon them, it may gloss over them, but is certainly does not study them in depth. Although we have drawn from primary sources in Arabic and Persian, presenting various legal and theological views with respect to issues like consensus [ijma'], as well as traditional exegesis, both ancient and contemporary, it was not the objective of this book to expound exhaustively upon the views of every school of .thought

Our immediate and most pressing goal was to demonstrate that Shi'ite Islam is a genuine, legal and spiritual expression of traditional Islam, both in orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In the same way that Sunni Islam is based in doctrine and practice on the basic principles of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition, so is Shi'ite Islam, which, in its traditional form, has the added advantage of having been preserved and reaffirmed by a continuous and direct line of successors, the Holy Imams, the natural heirs of the wilayah, .the Cycle of Prophecy

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The goal of this book, then, is to demonstrate that, far from being a heretical schismatic sect or fundamentalist form of Islam, as one hears over and over again, and which is more or less groundless, Shi'ism is the living expression of original Muhammadan Islam, perfectly preserved by his sucessors, the Holy Imams from the Prophetic Household [ahl al-bayt]. It was for this reason, that we proposed, without any polemical or apologetic intent, to present the Shi'ite point of view, with the highest possible degree of objectivity, without any concession to influence by the prejudiced views of its detractors, be they Muslim or non-Muslim. We have presented Shi'ite Islam from a Shi'ite point of view. We made sure to put aside outside influences received during our academic formation for, as G. Bachelard has pointed out, these can turn into real epistemological obstacles which .impede objectivity

Readers should not be offended if, at given moments, they get the impression that they are reading a panegyric. This impression is to be expected as this work does not contain the redundant repetition of pejorative postulations presented in Orientalist works which claim to present Islam and the Arab world "objectively." Despite the overt contempt its secular ideologists manifest towards Islam, the West remains cynically passive. This attitude, however, can only be understood within its historical context. The Western animosity towards Islam forms part of a long history of cultural encounters through which .the West attempted to impose its hegemony on the East

It should come as no surprise that the unrepressed hatred towards Islam and Arabs forms the very basis of much Western Orientalism. In many cases, Orientalism has been more or less officially at the service of the intellectual self-satisfaction of secular illustrated despotism and the conservatism of Western imperialist authoritarianism. Be it politically, militarily or intellectually, Western imperialism rarely hides its overwhelming aversion towards those who resist being physically or economically annexed as colonies, .and those who refuse to be assimilated culturally, linguistically, mentally and spiritually

It should be known from the onset that we are not unaware of the various aspects which have fallen outside of the reach of our study. Despite shortcomings related to time and space, we have attempted to develop our arguments in the most satisfactory fashion, using all our abilities to help readers overcome their resistance to the topic, the result of heightened sensitivities caused by events of worldwide repurcussions which, directly or .indirectly, involve Shi'ite Islam

Since this book was written so rapidly as a response to current events, it cannot be considered an introduction to Shi'ite Islam. Any such claim would do a grave injustice to Muslim scholars who have devoted their entire lives to the study of one of the many fields which this book has merely surveyed with a bird's eye view. We have merely shown some of the scenery of Shi'ism, not its depth and detail. However, in our own defense, the general overview we have provided may be justified by the fact that it is not the fruit of improvisation. This book is the result of years of study on the origins of Shi'ite Islam. Even though the book was written during the first semester of the ١٩٩۴ academic year, it should be mentioned that its final form was based on various preliminary versions and partial drafts from courses and lectures we delivered in the Seminarios de historia, pensamiento y cultura del mundo islámico [Lectures on the History, Thought, and Culture of the Islamic .World] between ١٩٩١ and ١٩٩٢

This series of lectures was organized by the Argentinian Institute for Islamic Culture and the Cultural Bureau of the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires and took place in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires. Any good which comes from this limited contribution to the topic of Shi'ite Islam is due, in great part, to the valuable critical interest displayed by collegues, friends, and students, whose questions and observations .contributed considerably to the preparation of the final version of the book

The very idea of writing an article on the basis of those classes and lectures owes much to the guidance of Dr. Francisco García Bazán, Dean of the Department of Philosophy, and Director of the Center for Research into the History and Philosophy of Religion at John F. Kennedy University of Argentina, as well as the Editor of the journal Epimeleia. Dr. García Bazán must be thanked, first and foremost, for encouraging me to write this article. He deemed the article a necessary contribution to scholarship. He understood, much better than most Orientalists, that Shi'ism, although representing a minority tradition, represents a spiritual current of Gnostic illumination, law and theology, which is entirely Islamic in orthodoxy and orthopraxy, to the same extent as mainstream and majoritarian Sunni Islam. To be sincere, we must recognize that it was our director, Dr. García Bazán, who revived our interest in writing that article which was always in an .indefinite state and which we could never come around to completing

Dr. García Bazán's constant encouragement gave us an almost journalistic rhythm of redaction and, in little time, he granted us the time and the confidence to transform those initial rough drafts into a completed work. We are greatly indebted to the generous spirit of Dr. F. García Bazán, who, besides always knowing how and when to help us, from start to finish, has been of great benefit for his scholarly knowledge and experience, counseling and guiding us with mastery in many ways. We will always consider it a privilege and an honor to have worked besides this great master of philosophy and .comparative religion. We also thank him for permitting us to republish our work

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We are equally grateful to Hujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin Feisal Morhell of the World Center of Islamic Sciences of the Hawdah 'Ilmiyyah from Qum in the Islamic Republic of Iran, who also happens to be the Director of Cultural Affairs for the Fundación Cultural Oriente and Editor of the Spanish version of the academic journal Az-Zaqalain, for his interest in republishing the article which gave origin to this book. Hujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin Feisal Morhell is a young specialist in traditional Islamic sciences who is not alien to this work since he proof-read our Arabic and Persian translations and, furthermore, provided us access to all of the primary Islamic sources which appeared in the original .article

The bibliography for the book, however, has been greatly amplified by Dr. John A. Morrow. We would also like to thank Hujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin Murtada Beheshti, General Director of the Islamic Thought Foundation of Tehran, and the Editor-in-Chief of the Spanish version of the journal Az-Zaqalain; Hujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, the resident 'alim at the Ja'fari Islamic Center in Toronto, Canada, and Dr. Liyakat 'Ali Takim, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Denver, whom we thank especially for reviewing the doctrinal, juridical, and historical aspects dealt with in the present book, with truly limitless dedication, patience and generosity. There is no doubt whatsoever that we would have faced many difficulties during the preparation of this work were it not for the constant advice and observations made by these great scholars and brilliant Muslim. Thanks to their help, however, we have overcome many obstacles and we will be certain to include their contributions in a future .edition of the Spanish version of the book

There are many people in Argentina, the United States, Canada, the U.K., Spain, and Iran, who collaborated with us during the preparing of this study, in its dissemination, and in its first English translation. In this sense, we are particularly grateful to Mrs. Sumeia Younes from the World Center of Islamic Sciences of the Hawdah 'Ilmiyyah in Qum in the Islamic Republic or Iran and Editorial Secretary for the journal Az-Zaqalain, for reading the manuscript of the first Spanish article, as well as the American linguist, Mrs. Barbara Castleton, from Ohio University, who had the kindness of proofreading the English translation and preparing a commendatory preface; to Mrs. Rachida Bejja for painstakingly correcting the Arabic transliteration and for Mr. Gustavo César Bize, Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Thought in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Universidad de Buenos Aires and at the Universidad Nacional de ٣ de Febrero in Buenos .Aires who was in charge of reviewing the English translation

We are also grateful to the following young Islamologists, Mr. Ángel Horacio Molina and Mrs. María Eugenia Gantus, who read the final Spanish and English versions of the work. They are both young research scholars at the Center for Oriental Studies, School of Letters, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario, in Santa Fe, Argentina, an institution associated with the Mulla Sadra Center for Islamic Studies and Research (CEDIMS) [Centro de Estudios y Documentación Islámicos Mulla Sadra] at the Universidad Católica Argentina de La Plata (Sede Bernal). We are particularly grateful to its General Coordinator, Dr. Horacio López Romano, for the generous institutional space he has provided to us, opening us the door to his installations and Dr. Sonia Yebara, Director of the Center for Oriental Studies of the School of Literature of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario for their unselfish institutional .support

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Other friends and colleagues read fragments or complete version of my rough drafts, providing an impressive volume of critical observations and facts. It would be impossible to mention them all. Nevertheless, we would like to express our gratitude to the following persons, whose constant kindness and cooperation facilitated our task: Mr. Ángel Almazán de Gracia, the Spanish cultural journalist, writer, and historian, who specializes in Sorian culture and Numantine archeology, for enthusiastically reading this work and citing it in many of his articles and books, as well as his generous and selfless support; to Mr. Mikail Álvarez Ruiz, Director of the Biblioteca Islámica Ahlul Bayt from Sevilla, Spain, to whom we owe the first digital version of the Spanish original, and which has been well-received and distributed over the Internet.

He was the first to conceive of the idea of turning our article into a book and he is also one of the most energetic promoters of our work on the Internet. It was on the basis of the digital edition that he prepared that Dr. John A. Morrow based his English version. The valuable collaboration of Mr. Héctor H. Manzolillo, one of the most prolific and recognized translators of Islamic texts in Spanish, also stands out. He was kind enough to review the notes to the English translation and making corrections which were greatly appreciated by the translator and editor.

Finally, we would like to express our endless gratitude to the editor, Dr. John A. Morrow, Assistant Professor of Modern Languages at Northern State University in the United States, to whom we owe the first English edition of our work, as well as his scrupulous critical annotations. The exchanges which resulted from his translation have allowed us to know a marvelous human being, wise yet humble, who honors us by his irreplaceable friendship. We would also like to thank our wife, Mónica Delia Pereiras, for supporting patiently and lovingly my domestic "absences" through all the time it took us to write and correct this book.

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We would also like to thank our three daughters, Ruth Noemí, María Inés and María de los Ángeles, whose affectionate interruptions made the labor of this book both pleasant and possible; to our parents, Saturnino and Elvira; to our brothers, Daniel and Cristina; and to all our family and friends for standing by us, unconditionally, in a thousand and one ways. And, last but not least, we would like to thank Mr. Muhammad Taqi Ansariyan and .Mawlana Muhammad Rizvi for encouraging and supporting this academic endeavor

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The article “Shi‘ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy” was first published in ۱۹۹۴ in the journal Epimeleia: revista de estudios sobre la tradición. It was written with the purpose of analyzing the various arguments and approaches employed by Western scholars and opinion-makers to characterize “Islamic fundamentalism,” an ill-defined and ill-understood social phenomena occurring in the Muslim world. The very term “fundamentalism,” as applied to Islam, is inappropriate and arbitrary, and finds its sole justification in the language of the press. The immediate objective of the article was to explain why such a characterization of Islam was not only erroneous in application, but a serious oversimplification, a tendentious interpretation motivated by a hidden agenda.

The article also sheds light on questions related to the use and abuse of certain .arguments

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It exposed some of the mistakes made by Orientalists and corrected, once and for all, a series of serious shortcomings. It demonstrated how well-known Arabists and Modernist Muslim thinkers repeatedly misapply various terms. It exposed their misappropriation of Western religious terminology--filled with false assumptions and prejudices--and how they indiscriminately apply them to a wide variety of spiritual traditions. Those who profess expertise in the study and understanding of Islam and Shi'ism, often without possessing even basic proficiency in Arabic and Persian, take terms from the Western world and attempt to apply them to the Eastern world. They take Christian terminology .and attempt to impose it upon Islam

Not only are these technical terms misappropriated, they are applied to traditional Islamic concepts which are taken totally out of context. This common practice is as ludicrous as taking Islamic terminology and applying it to the Christian world. Some scholars could argue that the Catholics are "Shi'ites," followers of the "infallible" Popes. Others would argue that the Catholics are the Sunnis, and the Catholic Church is the Caliphate. The Protestants would be labeled as "Shi'ites," sectarian heretics who broke from the main body of believers. Yet others would say that the Protestants are "Wahhabis" since they are literalist fundamentalists while the Catholics are "Shi'ites" .because of their hermeneutical tradition

Christianity would not be without its Sufis like Saint Theresa of Avila, San Juan de la Cruz, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, Master Eckhardt, John Tauler, and Henry Suso and "martyrs" like Saint Joan of Arc. As misguided as it may be, this practice of imposing a Western religious framework on the Islamic faith has been done with impunity so much so that authors have not even seen the need to justify their extrapolations, to confirm .their correctness, or to consider their relevance

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When we first wrote the article, we focused our criticism on Western Orientalism. Now, however, we have extended our critique--and most justifiably so--to the social and political sciences in general. In recent decades, these two fields have erroneously employed certain scientific and non-scientific terms. This includes terms like "fundamentalism" which the social and political sciences apply to anything in the Islamic .world which seems reactionary or conservative

In fact, the half-religious, half-political phenomenon they are observing has nothing to do with "fundamentalism." According to its original meaning, "fundamentalism" denotes a dry literalist spirit, a concept which is completely alien to the Islamic tradition. As a result, the application of the derogatory term "fundamentalism" to Islam is a distortion of the true nature of things. It reflects an attempt to impose a label by lexical manipulation. To make matters worse, the application of the term "fundamentalism" gives a false impression of [Islam to Westerners. Rather than presenting Islam as it is, they present it as it is not.[۱

Sacred tradition--the source of all spirituality--and religion, which is its outer aspect--cannot be subjected to the same scrutiny as the pure sciences. One cannot approach a spiritual tradition like a physicist deals with gravity, a biologist deals with life, a meteorologist deals with the climate, or an entomologist deals with insects. Studying religious tradition is not the same as observing natural phenomena. For the sociologist, political scientist or philosopher, it is impossible to split religious phenomenon into bits and pieces with the same callous indifference a coroner employs to dissect a cadaver. According to Positivism, such an aloof attitude is natural and to be expected of any .scientist

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While the social sciences are not pure sciences, researchers in these fields also focus on observation. Social scientists employ rigorous methods of research, documentation, and analysis when studying a social system. They use statistics to bring together all the determining factors and conditions in order to describe social change. They attempt, to the highest degree possible, to be as strict and exhaustive as physicists and biologists when dealing with human factors. This scientific spirit forms the very basis of research in the social sciences. However, unlike the pure sciences, which are based on scientific facts, the social sciences rely on human factors, information provided by people, and so-called .public opinion, making them particularly susceptible to subjectivity

From the time the original article was written to the publication of this first English edition, over a decade has elapsed. During that time, we have observed how English terms like "fundamentalism" and "radical Islamism," along with Spanish and French terms like integrismo and intégrisme, have been consistently interchanged as if they were equivalents. These terms were treated as synonyms by specialists in Islamic Studies. They have been and continue to be used by social critics and political analysts when commenting upon foreign policy and international affairs. These spokespersons are often the initial source of public opinion. Subsequently, whether it embellishes or minimizes, .public opinion is one of the greatest influences on public life in the Western world

A nation's likes, dislikes, admiration, indifference and contempt are all sentiments which are based on public opinion. One has only to look at the popular media in the United States for proof of this assertion. The powers that be are notorious for using public opinion to their advantage to bring people in line with their plans. It is apparent that wars .of conquest are no longer waged in the name of expansionism and imperialism

Whether it is called the New World Order of the Freemasons, the Illuminati, George Monbiot, and George W. Bush; the Jewish Conspiracy of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, Adolf Hitler, and Henry Ford; Karl Krause's World Republic; Aldous Huxley's Brave New World; George Orwell's Big Brother; the World Arrogance or the Great Satan of Imam Khomeini; the Z.O.G. of the Neo-Nazis; the Evil Empire of Paul Hellyer; the Shadow Government, the Trust, the Syndicate, the World Government or the Invisible Empire from popular culture; globalization--the new term for socio-political and economic world domination--is now being carried out in the name of democracy and freedom of .expression, effectively muzzling opposition from human rights activists

People are no longer conquered and colonized, they are "liberated" and brought into the fold of Western-style "democracy," the new imperialism with its extreme economic model of carnivorous and cannibalistic capitalism. As for the "freedom of expression," it only applies to imperial propaganda aimed at manufacturing public opinion on the basis of its .socio-economic and political interests

Since the message which is emitted serves the interest of the powers that be, it comes as no surprise that it has been systematically manipulated.[۲] While such spin can be detected by expert analysts, it usually passes unnoticed by the masses. In many cases, the message is diluted by means of subliminal mechanisms which are not recognizable or [even perceptible at a conscious level.[۳

This public opinion--which is really nothing more but the opinion of the socio-economic elite--is controlled and constructed by means of the mass media. Public opinion influences the minds of people and affects many aspects of their lives: from personal relations to group relations, from religious to political convictions, and even questions of personal taste. If public opinion is manufactured, as Noam Chomsky has eloquently postulated, the social sciences, which depend on the daily offerings of the mass media, find themselves in a particularly dubious position. Within the framework of this conundrum, it is imperative to examine how attempts to construct public opinion by means of the mass media result in what Jurgen Habermas calls a "non-public opinion."[۴] It is a "non-public opinion" because--in reality--it merely reflects the interests of a certain sector of political and economic power. The creation of public opinion serves social, economic, and political purposes. Part and parcel of this political and economic sector is to

use derogatory terms like “fundamentalism,” intégrisme or integrismo to describe Muslims. By doing so, the nouveaux maîtres du monde, the new rulers of the world, as Jean Ziegler calls them, group all Muslims with violent extremists, and isolated groups of radical reformists. In this way, the manufacturers of public opinion act as if the term “fundamentalism” could be universally applied to all those who legitimately defend their .traditional political and religious beliefs

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Considering the fact that the mass media is manipulated on a mass scale, the question begs to be asked: "Should the social sciences cast aside their objectivity and simply submit to this 'virtual reality' built upon falsehood and deceit?" The obvious answer is no. It should not and it must not. However, when we look at the cultural landscape in the Western world, when we read newspapers and watch television, we see that many social scientists are merely echoing false and deceitful public opinion. In fact, many of them use the same concepts and terms that social engineers use to falsify the facts. The situation has become so blurred in the social sciences that scholars need to seriously reassess their basic assumptions, academic objectives, and research tools. They need to start :addressing these preoccupying epistemological problems. As Barbara Castleton explains

We live in an age in which a selection of a dozen or so buzz words can turn a nation from protector to aggressor. We live in an age where lies revealed bring no shame in the liar, merely a restatement of the lie in a configuration that both extends and perpetuates it. Ours is not the first era in which this has occurred. History is replete with such episodes, notably the Crusades and the Holocaust. But the direction taken by the West in its pursuit of "terrorists," and in America's attempts to "protect the homeland" from said "terrorists" through a "war on terror" has ceased to have any meaning beyond the utterance of the .words themselves

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As any scientist or scholar knows, true science and epistemology is contrary to opinion because opinion is a notoriously flawed source of information. Opinion, be it personal or public, is subjective, and impossible to be validate scientifically. As Gaston Bachelard has pointed out, opinion does not think and when it does, it thinks poorly, turning need into knowledge.[۵] Since public opinion is constructed, it can contribute nothing to science .unless it is deconstructed à la Jacques Derrida

The role of the scientist is to overcome opinion, to be utterly objective, to uncover the facts, and to let them speak for themselves. This is even more important for social scientists, those who work with human factors, since prejudice and falsehood can creep into opinion, interfering with the scientific spirit in a multitude of ways. Unless social scientists can overcome this epistemological obstacle--the perilous problem of tainted sources--their results will be flawed and their conclusions will be distorted. If social scientists compromise the scientific spirit, allowing distorted data to interfere with their observations, the result will be a slanted view of reality. These methodological mistakes will be implicit in their theoretical framework, inevitably leading to erroneous conclusions .based on false premises

Unfortunately, due to its reliance on public opinion, the field of social sciences now abounds with bias, resulting in a reductionist rendition of social reality. We could not have it any other way since public opinion, as generated by the mass media, reflects the surreal attitude of those who inhabit the world of "virtual reality." This virtual world has not relation whatsoever to the real world, with actual and factual representations of reality. The virtual world is merely a reflection of television which deforms images, creating a slanted vision of the world. Journalism, too, both oral and written, is aimed at creating public opinion. And it is from journalism that social scientists draw their material for the study of conflicts in the Middle East. Journalism, to a large extent, is merely officially falsified information. It describes the Islamic world with inaccurate and tainted terminology. In some cases, it is not only social scientists, but commentators and philosophers, who draw from this same terminology, who err in this way. These professionals, rather than clarifying concepts, employ terms as primitive weapons tossed .at one's opponent in a grand scheme of international intrigue

Within the field of social sciences are those who believe that traditional Islamic society can be conveniently split apart for the purpose of study. They attempt to separate Islam's sociopolitical aspects from its religious and legal ones. They attempt to separate Islam's outer aspects from its inner ones. By isolating elements, rather than studying them as parts of a cohesive system, they attempt to depict Islam as a type of reactionary conservatism. In order to make the definition even more damaging, they label Islam as "fundamentalist," intégriste or integrista. None of these verbal constructions are capable of providing a proper definition. To use the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the signifier [and the signified are simply not the same.[۶

If this terminological incoherence, reminiscent of the Tower of Babel, existed solely among Western sociologists and political scientists, there would not be much at which to marvel. However, some modern Arab sociologists like Fatimah Mernessi, and even Islamized Western philosophers like Roger Garaudy, have joined this chorus of confusion. By embracing erroneous terms like "fundamentalism" and intégrisme, scholars like Mernessi and Garaudy give them scientific and philosophical legitimacy. Sociologists, political scientists, historians, and social thinkers, all use the terms "fundamentalism," intégrisme and integrismo with complete confidence, as if these words expressed a positive reality and a defining characteristic of Islam. What is worse is that some of them use these terms in radically different ways. If we were to apply the judgment of R. Otto with respect to the term "irrational," we would say that social scientists have made a "field .day" or a real obsession of these words

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There are those who argue that sociology, political science, and history-- being reality-based sciences--must work within the framework of facts, concepts, terms, and materials provided by the mass media. However, since the terminology these social scientists use is drawn from the press-which is loaded with inaccuracies--the very basis of their studies can be called into question. If the terminology is incorrect, it undermines the understanding of the social phenomenon being studied. The terms “fundamentalism,” intégrisme and integrismo are examples of terms which journalists use Abusively and irresponsibly. While these concepts can describe a positive reality when used appropriately according to their scientific sense, they are misused by the press, .presenting readers with an erroneous interpretation of social events

It makes little difference to the mass media whether “fundamentalism” is a cause or whether it is a response. For the social sciences, the phenomenon is studied in isolation. It is examined independently of its causes. As a result, the true nature of the subject is lost in thought, pigeonholed, and given the pejorative label of “fundamentalism,” intégrisme or integrismo. One must wonder whether this biased approach--which fails to .contextualize its subject--is not the most blatant form of fundamentalism

Whether it is close reading, the Feminist Criticism of Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixoux; the New Historicism of Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, and Mikhail Bakhtin; the Psychoanalytic Criticism of Jacques Lacan; the Structuralism of Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Roland Barthes; the Marxist Criticism of Georg Lukács and Keith Ellis; the Postcolonial Criticism of Edward Sa‘id, Homi Bhabha, Benita Parry, Kwame Nkrumah, Albert Memmi, Aimé Césaire, Derek Walcott, and Gayatari Spivak or the Phenomenological Hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer or Mario Valdés, a subject should never be studied outside of its context. As I.M. Lewis asserted almost fifty years ago, “Islam can be analyzed sociologically only within the context of the actual life and...beliefs of living .(Muslim communities” (۲

On what basis, then, do social scientists apply the label of "fundamentalism" to Islamic movements? Have they conducted fieldwork among Muslim activists? Have they analyzed the socio-political and economic causes of Islamic activism? On the contrary, much of what has been written about Islamic fundamentalism has been based on the media. One such book, dealing with the Islamic Revolution of Iran, was based exclusively on newspaper and magazine articles. Since such work is neither scholarship nor investigative journalism it does not even merit to be mentioned by name. Clearly, if social scientists persist in viewing their subject in isolation, no religious or political movement ".which resists globalization will be safe from the labels of "fundamentalism

This is the same reductionist and essentialist attitude adopted by Formalism and New Criticism with regards to literature. Unless the methodology of the social sciences is modified, unscientific slurs such as "fundamentalism," intégrisme or integrismo will continue to circulate. Rather than describing and defining social behavior and concepts, terms like "fundamentalism" confuse them, diluting and distorting their true meaning. The only purpose these words play is to obfuscate, disqualify, discredit, abase, and reject... .They reflect the very worst of sociological jargon

As a result of this terminology confusion, it is necessary to clarify certain concepts like "Islamic fundamentalism," intégrisme islamique, integrismo islámico, and "radical Islamism." Despite the fact that these terms are used synonymously in the mass media as well the academic world, they refer to different political attitudes and currents. The only thing they have in common is that they are rooted in the Islamic cultural universe. Introducing the term "Islamism" or "radical Islamism" into our discussion is relevant as it is another label which is pinned to Muslims on top of "fundamentalism," intégrisme and integrismo which have been worn down through constant use. As for Shi'ite Islam, it is commonly considered the very manifestation of "radical Islamism" in its most militant and .combative form

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In the lexical world, there exist words which are erroneous from every perspective: whether considered etymologically, semantically or lexically. One such term is "Islamic fundamentalism" which is erroneously employed in the French and Spanish sense of intégrisme or integrismo. All of these terms are drawn from modern Christian religious experience and all predate the phenomenon wrongly labeled as "Islamic fundamentalism," intégrisme or integrismo. Despite this fact, they are almost exclusively applied to Islam, without taking into consideration that the term "fundamentalism" was introduced into Christian theological language as the result of a Protestant controversy which took place at the beginning of the twentieth century. After that, the term was adopted into the language of secular philosophers and historians who were more or less .unabashed enemies of both Christianity and Islam

If we look beyond the present frenzy for the word "fundamentalist," we see that the concept serves to supplant an earlier term: intégrisme or integrismo. Despite the fact that "fundamentalism," intégrisme and integrismo have different etymologies they all express the same incorrect concept. As a result, they are interchanged without distinction and are considered synonymous. Rather than a desire for terminological precision, these terms reflect an ideological motive, a means of legitimizing sociologically what is in reality a .political objective

A Catholic writer, when speaking about traditional Islam, might employ the term "fundamentalist," associating it with Protestant conservatism. A Protestant, Marxist or secular liberal--all anti-Catholic to the core--might opt for the term intégrisme or integrismo, associating it with the reactionary conservative Catholicism of the nineteenth century. As can be seen, the choice of terms depends on the ideological inclination or conviction of the social scientist or philosopher. The selection of terms like "fundamentalism," intégrisme, integrismo, and "radical Islamism" are not casual or .arbitrary. They are used as part of a deliberate and intentional political policy

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The general application of terms like "fundamentalism," intégrisme, integrismo, and "radical Islamism" to every Islamic group which opposes Western secularism and cultural imperialism misleads those who seek to understand the true nature of Islam. This terminological mudslinging leads to confusion, giving the impression that traditional Muslims reflect the same reactionary and conservative attitude as some recalcitrant sectors of Christianity. It gives the impression that Muslim "fundamentalists" are the Islamic equivalent of Christian fundamentalists. The use of terms like "fundamentalist," intégriste, integrista, and "radical Islamist" may be well-established in the press; however, the language of the mediac merely reflects the vague, imprecise and indefinite terminology from the colloquial language. Consequently, it is not well-adapted to the use of science. It can only be of relative value to those who hide their ideological motives .under the façade of a pseudo-scientific language

The use of imprecise notions to describe the socio-political reality of Islam is clearly objectionable. It is inappropriate because it forces the reader to make mental contortions in search for the meaning behind such empty terms such as "fundamentalism," intégrisme, integrismo and "radical Islamism." There is no doubt that reality-based sciences are based on information taken from daily life. This applies to psychology, sociology, political science, history, and so forth. However, one cannot construct something concrete on the basis of concepts which are predicated on an entirely different .socio-historical experience

If concepts are transformed into fact, they will vanish as soon as one attempts to reduce them to an abstract formula. Consequently, any sociological concept which is devoid of an intelligible and objective structure is inconceivable. Any sociological concept must refer to the concrete relation with an object. It must constitute a typical plexus of the significant intentions grouped together in the definition of the social reality. Let us analyze, then, the ".term "fundamentalism

Examing any aspect of the Islamic world on the basis of erroneous terms like "fundamentalism," intégrisme or integrismo can only lead to perilous postulations. As we explained before, these terms are erroneous because they fail to consider the correlations between doctrine and social groups. As a result, the use of such terms prevents an objective analysis of the relationship between traditional Islamic thought, the Modernist mentality or any other political and religious currents. No religious or political movement can be understood from the outside. It is essential to examine any such movements within the broader doctrinal controversies from which they surge and develop. In the case of traditional Islamic thought this is particularly relevant. When :applied to Christianity, the term fundamentalism fits the context

it has antecedents, off-chutes, and aberrations. When applied to Islam, the term fundamentalism is outside the framework of its socio-religious evolution. Unlike Christian fundamentalism, which has a history and a development which can be traced, Islamic fundamentalism does not reflect a concrete doctrine like liberalism, fascism, socialism, communism or anarchism. The terms Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic fascism, intégrisme and integrismo are applied to a vast array of imprecise ideas covering virtually every political current in Islam. These multifarious manifestations of intégrisme or integrismo share a combination of social concern with religious doctrine. At the same time, they constitute other complex realities which are frequently only definable by their .opposites

As we have seen, the mass media is responsible for spreading falsehood and legitimizing slanderous and scientifically inaccurate terms like "fundamentalism," intégrisme, integrismo and "radical Islamism." This does not mean that the mass media is the mother of all evil--quite the contrary--it is the very concept of secular modernity and globalization, the "progressive" anti-traditional attitude of modern man which poses the greatest threat to humanity. From the time concepts like secularism and Positivism first emerged in the West, the world has been transformed into a "global village," according to .the definition of Marshall McLuhan

It is not the mass media, then, which is the cause of certain aberrations of interpretation which offend the good sense of any critic. It is part and parcel of the Western worldview. As for us, we will continue to criticize social scientists and philosophers for converting "opinion" into "fact." While we risk sounding like a "fundamentalist," intégriste or integrista, our stance forms part of a long line of spiritual resistance to all attempts to homogenize the world and the word, seeking to lower language to the lowest common denominator; in this case, taking the language of science down to the level of the mass .media

As social scientist and philosopher, we find it difficult to digest that scholars in the social sciences--particularly anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and modern historians--have refused to redefine the terms "fundamentalism," intégrisme or integrismo. Despite the rich body of terminology at their disposition and their ability to coin new terms, they have failed to reconsider the terms "fundamentalism," intégrisme or integrismo. This scholarly stagnation is startling considering the central importance of scientifically accurate terms to the social sciences. At the very least one would have expected social scientists to employ different terms than the biased ones used by political .commentators and opinion makers

It is certainly strange to see social scientists and philosophers give credibility to terms like intégrisme or integrismo when their use is technically inappropriate. Such terms contribute nothing to scholarship, nor do they enrich the language of journalism. When people speak of "Islamic fundamentalism," they often forget that "fundamentalism" is a modern Christian term. Even though the concept has left its Christian origin and found broader applications, it continues to convey the idea of American Protestantism. Its application to Islam, which is completely distinct, contributes nothing to the understanding of the social reality in question. The term "fundamentalism" may be .appropriate as an analogy when comparing Christianity to Islam

In the Muslim world, the term “fundamentalist” might be partially applicable to radical reformist movements like Wahhabism or Salafism. However, if the term “fundamentalism” ceases to be used as an analogy and is considered as a definition, the end result is an erroneous oversimplification. We must always remember that fundamentalism is rooted in American Protestantism. The term does not refer to a universal phenomenon and is applicable exclusively to certain Christian currents in the .United States

Fundamentalism, per se, refers to a form of American Protestantism which opposes scientific and hermeneutical methods of scriptural criticism. Christian fundamentalists adopt a reactionary attitude which insists on a literal interpretation of the Bible. This is especially so with regards to those parts of the Scripture which refer to Creation. As a result of a literalist reading of Genesis, Christian fundamentalists reject the modern theory of biological evolution. As a result of this attitude, the issue of teaching evolution in public schools became a political controversy. Defending the infallibility of Scripture, Protestant fundamentalists attempted to organize a solid Christian block against Darwin’s .Theory of Evolution

Besides American Protestantism, there are other doomsday cults and charismatic evangelical movements who interpret contemporary events in light of Biblical Prophecy. Not only are they opposed to Western secularism, they are fervent defenders of the cultural supremacy and religious hegemony of Christian civilization. Religious fundamentalism, in the true sense of the term, is a purely Western phenomenon. It is the product of the “cultural wars” which took place at the beginning of the twentieth century and which have polarized American society into secular liberal democrats and neo-conservative right-wing Christian fundamentalists

The origin of Christian religious fundamentalism in the United States traces back to ۱۸۳۰. This was a period in which evangelical Protestantism had essentially become the official religion of American civil society. National identity was based on the perception that the United States was a Christian country. The defense of Christianity was viewed as the law of the land. During the nineteenth century, and despite the process of secularization and the separation of Church and State, Protestant Evangelism undeniably maintained its .hegemony with regards to the religious, cultural and social life in the United States

It was in this context, between ۱۹۱۰ and ۱۹۱۵, that a group of ۶۴ Anglo-Americans published a series of twelve booklets titled The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth which caused a controversy between two Christian currents: a radical conservative one and a more theologically liberal one. Written from a conservative Protestant perspective, the goal of the work was to confront modern liberal Christians who interpreteted the Gospel in light of secular modernity. As a result of advances in science and scholarship, these liberal Christians came to view certain Biblical passages as allegorical and metaphorical rather than historical. This was fiercely opposed by Christian fundamentalists who insisted that the Bible was the literal word of God which could not be .subjected to scientific scrutiny

As a whole, The Fundamentals established five points which became the basis of Christian fundamentalist identity: ۱) the belief in divine inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible; ۲) the belief in the divinity of Jesus, including his virgin birth; ۳) the belief in his physical resurrection; ۴) the belief in redemption through Christ's sacrifice on the cross; and, finally, ۵) the belief in the immanent second coming of Jesus Christ. Adherence to these five fundamentals became a symbolic starting point for the fundamentalist .movement

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The title of the publication was used to identify this literalist movement within American Protestantism, which already had a long history. As can clearly be gathered, fundamentalism is Christian in origin and is undoubtedly associated with Protestantism. Fundamentalism developed in the United States as a modern reaction of American conservatism. It is essentially anti-liberal and anti-modern. It opposes the critical analysis of the Bible, the secularization of the educational system, and Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Furthemore, it opposes socio-cultural, linguistic and racial diversity in American .society

It was only in the ۱۹۲۰'s that Protestant fundamentalism joined its forces to fight its cultural and legal battles. They declared war against "heretical" modernism, secular humanism, and the liberal ideas circulating among Christians who were open to Darwinism, Freudism, and Marxism, which were being taught in high schools and universities throughout the country. Stressing the infallibility of the Bible and the messianic mission of the American people, Protestant fundamentalists struggled against modern liberal thought which they viewed as a foreign influence on the "American way of life." For most of the twentieth century, Christian fundamentalists viewed Catholicism, secularism, and Socialism, as the greatest threats to their ideology. The first line of battle between fundamentalists and secular liberals was drawn around the teaching of .evolution in the public school system

While the fundamentalists were able to win cases against Darwinist professors, the fall-back from public opinion was costly as Christian fundamentalists came across as backwards and intolerant. Their anti-modernist rhetoric had little resonance with an American society firmly focused on perpetual progress. It is on the basis of this pre-existing public opinion of Christian fundamentalists that the mass media constructed the image of "Islamic fundamentalism," associating it excessively with the American .Protestant fundamentalism of that period

Protestant fundamentalism spread much easier in the southern states and the Mid-West than it did in the western and north-eastern states. The fundamentalist lobby was so strong in Tennessee that the state effectively prohibited the teaching of the Theory of Evolution, the culmination of the famous trail against Professor John Thomas Scopes in ١٩٢۵. The law was later deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States in ١٩۶٨. Despite this set-back, fundamentalist efforts opposing the teaching of biological evolution have continued to this day under the guise of presenting a "balanced view" of the two theories--evolutionism and creationism--and the recent incorporation of the "theory of intelligent design." After ١٩٢۵, Protestant fundamentalism lost much of its credibility. Unable to unite the nation under the banner of fighting the enemies of Christianity, the fundamentalist movement remained relatively inactive in American .society for the next fifty years

Nonetheless, the years of absence from the public sphere helped renew the ranks of the fundamentalist forces. The fundamentalists survived as a marginalized religious movement and remained vigorously persistent. It was thus that a Protestant fundamentalist sub-culture came to be created in the United States. Although not numerous, Christian fundamentalists represents a solid, well-organized group with a strong identity. Protestant fundamentalists have attempted to present themselves as an alternative to liberalism, Catholicism and, in recent decades, to Islam, which has spread rapidly among African Americans. As part of their evangelical mission, fundamentalists have created their own particularly powerful press on top of their already Abundant body .of publications thus helping to spread their theological message

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In the early ۱۹۳۰s, the programs Old Fashion Revival and Lutheran Hour greatly increased the fundamentalist presence in the mass media. In ۱۹۴۱, Carl McIntire, one of the leading fundamentalists in the Presbyterian Church, created the ACCC, the American Council of Christian Churches, to counter the creation of liberal organizations organized around the ecumenical FCC or Federal Council of Churches. After the Second World War, the ACCC became one of the founders of the International Fundamentalist Council and one of the main opponents of the World Council of Churches. McIntire, the founder of the ACCC, and host of ۲۰th Century Reformation Hour, became the most fervent and closest collaborator of Joseph McCarthy, the Senator for Wisconsin and Chief of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, notorious for the famous "witch hunts" he started during the presidency .of Harry Truman

McIntire, the fundamentalist leader, would prepare black lists of pastors suspected of collaborating with the Communists and would hand them to McCarthy. McIntire, who crusaded against communism, ecumenism, and liberal theology, was convinced that the new translation of the Bible, the Revised Standard Version, was the result of a "red conspiracy." All of these factors contributed to the resurgence of fundamentalism in the public sphere and political activity in the ۷۰'s and ۸۰'s and its impact on Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush has been decisive. In the most recent presidential elections in the United States, the neo-conservative protestant fundamentalist camp turned towards .George W. Bush just like secular liberals turned towards John Kerry

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In light of the above, it can be seen that the term "fundamentalism"--as applied to Islam--has a pejorative connotation. Originally, the term fundamentalism represented an intolerant attitude combined with a literalist interpretation of the Scriptures which was devoid of spirituality. When applied to Islam, however, the term "fundamentalist" represents a categorical rejection of modernism, secularism, and pluralism. While the meaning of the word has shifted semantically, it also serves as a politically motivated slur .which poorly describes a social phenomenon

As regards the other term, integrismo, it was first used in ۱۸۹۸ by Cándido Nocedal, a Spanish politician and journalist of Catholic faith, founder of the Partido Integrista. The term was used in the party's political organ, La Constancia. It was also used by Cándido Nocedal's son, the Spanish journalist and playwright, Ramón Nocedal y Romea, the founder of the newspaper El Siglo Futuro. The term integrista was employed by the Partido Integrista to designate a political attempt to integrate and unite all Catholic and Republican forces opposed to progressive liberal policies under the banner of Isabel II .and the Spanish monarchy

In our days, the words "fundamentalism," intégrisme and integrismo are applied to completely different issues, thus impeding a correct understanding of the actual phenomenon. Unfortunately, these terms continue to circulate from article to article and from book to book, gaining more contemptuous connotations with each subsequent use. To add chaos to confusion, there are scholars who insist that there are different types of "fundamentalism," intégrisme and integrismo. This amplification, multiplication, and variation of these base terms--which are inherently flawed--makes it increasingly difficult to differentiate between the American Protestantism--which is truly fundamentalist--and traditional Islamic thought emanating from the Muslim world. The very ambiguity of the term "fundamentalist," intégriste and integrismo, should be sufficient to demonstrate that they do not designate anything objectively. They merely .gather everything which is deemed intolerant under the same subjective umbrella

The terms “fundamentalism,” intégrisme and integrismo do not provide an objective description the Islamic phenomena they are supposed to describe. As a result, the validity of these terms cannot be acknowledged. They simply do not meet the scholarly standards established by the social sciences. Rather than reflecting a reality, the application of terms like “fundamentalism,” intégrisme and integrismo to Islam manifests a psychological problem on the part of the observer. Since the observer is biased, the observer is subjective. Since the observer is subjective, the observer makes value judgments, dismissing as backwards anything which is contrary to personal concepts of progress and modernity. The observer views Islam as an obstacle to personal advancement. The observer is terrified by the term “fundamentalist,” particularly when preceded by the adjective “Islamic,” reflecting the observer’s insecurity as well as an utter ignorance of the true nature of Islam. In fact, if what is wrongly labeled “Islamic .fundamentalism” were properly defined, it would no longer arouse fear

To object to the shortcomings of terms like “fundamentalism,” intégriste, integrista, and “radical Islamist” it not a mere intellectual exercise. Besides being used a weapons against Islam, these terms are full of conceptual flaws. They impede a proper description of the phenomena in question because they identify it erroneously. When Westerners think about “Islamic fundamentalism,” they are not thinking about a spiritual tradition, but rather a type of Christian religious extremism characterized by a rejection of science, an attitude which is completely alien to Islam. If it is an opposition to modernity which they wish to characterize, then it might be proper to qualify some types of Islamic activism as “traditionalism.” This term, it should be noted, is coined for descriptive purposes. It is not used pejoratively as we have no malicious intent to discredit those who oppose the .Western worldview

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As a result of this terminological confusion, we wrote a series of articles between ۱۹۹۴ and ۱۹۹۸ in which we attempted to differentiate between Protestant fundamentalists and Catholic integristas from the ill-named "Islamic fundamentalists" or integristas.[۷] We referred to the latter as "principialists" rather than integristas or "fundamentalists."[۸] The term "principialist" is far better suited to describe those who adhere to the principles of faith than term "fundamentalist," with its strong right-wing Christian connotations. The term "principialist" is also the correct translation for the Arabic usul al-din or the Basic .Principles of Faith

We proposed the term principialist, not to add another label, but as an objective acknowledgment that in Islam following the principles of faith is neither backwards nor the reflection of a medieval mentality. The principles of faith [usul al-din] are the pillars [al-arkan] on which any interpretation [ijtihad] of Islam rests: its formulation, articulation, and development. At the same time, the usul al-din represent the metaphysical or transcendent principles of the illuminative wisdom of Islamic Gnosis. The concept of the usul al-din can also be translated as "roots," "bases," or "basic components" of faith. The usul al-din represent the cultural foundation of what is erroneously labeled as Islamic fundamentalism. The usul al-din are the roots or foundation of Islam because the term .asl, the singular form of usul, contains all of these shades of meaning

The correct term to describe those who defend the integrity of traditional Islamic principles would be "Islamic principialists," which is far better than "Islamic fundamentalists," as the term "principialist" indicates a call for a return to the principles of Islam. What we refer to as "traditional principialism" is the common cultural foundation of Islamic thought. Like a polished diamond, "traditional principialism" presents multiples faces, reflecting different points of view with respect to political and doctrinal questions, .yet which always emphasizes a strong Islamic identity

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Whether they are from the East or from the West, whether they are traditional activists or radical reformists, Muslims have no doubt that Islam is the solution to all the problems faced by the world today. This conviction is based on the fact that the Prophet Muhammad, as the Final Messenger of God [Rasul Allah], brought forth a Revelation, the Qur'an, which would last until the end of times. However moderate or radical Muslims may be in the eyes of the Western world, they universally agree that Islam can solve .every single economic, political or personal problem

On the same token, these principles constitute the pillars or foundations [al-arkan] of the Islamic tradition. These principles have governed the formation of Islam, its expression, and the development of its legal code. At the same time, these principles are the metaphysical foundations of Islam. They transcend the limitations of the legal experience. They extend to speculative or contemplative matters of Gnostic illumination. They lead to Divine Truth, the Primal Cause, the source from which all knowledge flows as a guide to human beings, covering every dimension of human existence. For Muslims, the usul al-din are universal unitarian principles which allow us to perceive the multiplicity .[within Divine Unity [al-tawhid

Besides Islam, all of the great religious, philosophical or legal traditions of the world are principialist because they are all based on their respective doctrinal principles. As the famous saying of Latin philosophers goes, nihil est sine ratione, "Nothing is without a reason." For many people, including a large number of specialists, the first problem posed by a study of Islamic movements is as elementary as the inappropriate use of the term "fundamentalism." In general terms, the word "fundamentalism" can be used with .extraordinary dexterity

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It can be applied to many differing religious, political, and social phenomena. This very versatility, however, is the single greatest proof the term is nothing more than an insidious and malicious label rather than the true formulation of a concept solidly grounded in a sociological, political or historical description. Furthermore, the use of the term "fundamentalism," with regards to Islam, excludes the notion of spiritual tradition. This is because the term "fundamentalism" refers to modern attitudes which, by definition, are anti-traditional. In the Islamic context, so-called "fundamentalism" is actually a traditional attitude in defense of the immutable principles of Divine Truth. It is certainly strange to see how quickly certain ideas spread, imposing themselves with .authority, when in fact, as in the case of "fundamentalism," they are a recent invention

Considering this background of bias towards Islam, no sociological, political or historical study on so-called "Islamic fundamentalism," intégrisme or integrismo can be entirely objective. Rather than attempting to understand the phenomena, they have simply labeled it, avoiding any other explanation. At no point in time have Western scholars considered that what is perceived on the outside as "fundamentalism," intégrisme or integrismo, may in fact corresponds to an entirely different type of social conduct. They very term "fundamentalist" has become hopelessly confused due to excessive comparisons to the Christian model: be it Protestant fundamentalism or Catholic intégrisme or integrismo. The use of terms like "fundamentalism," intégrisme and integrismo to refer to Islamic activism manifests "the fallacy of comparing Christian .phenomena to Muslim phenomena

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It is the proverbial case of comparing apples to oranges or, in this case, apples to cactus. By doing so, one commits an implicit logical error. Once established, however, and conveniently disseminated, terms like "fundamentalism," intégrisme and integrismo have become accepted by specialists as official truth and objective reality. As we have seen, however, these terms are not the least bit objective; they were drawn from Christian religious terminology and imposed on Islam when the model simply does not fit the mould. Terminological half-truths can only be maintained by eradicating any conceptual .differences, thus negating any distinctive traits in the observed phenomena

When one wishes to mislead, to misguide, to conceal and to camouflage a reality, there is nothing more fitting than reductionism. As a result, whether they are Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Hindu or Muslim, those who adhere to their principles of faith, their traditional belief, and reject modernity, secularization and globalization, are denounced as irrational "fundamentalists," without the desire to understand or expose the reasons for their .resistance

The result of this biased outlook, this desire to assimilate, to confine, to reduce, and to redefine reality, can be seen in the social sciences when scholars attempt to make the facts fit the definition. By doing so, they undermine a true interpretation of "Islamic fundamentalism" as a legitimate form of traditional resistance against an invading cultural force. What is erroneously described as "Islamic fundamentalism" is the normal defensive mechanism of a healthy organism against a foreign body, a phenomenon described as "Occidentosis" by Jalal-I Ahmad and "Westoxication" by 'Ali Shariati. Clearly, .the biased approach of the social sciences is self-evident

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The stubborn desire to follow a line of thought which goes against the observed facts, blindly following footsteps founded on fallacy, impedes any possibility of real research. Social scientists need to be reminded that the term investigate comes from the Latin investigare which means to "carefully research," "to follow the path," and to "discover." It is derived from vestigare which means "to follow the track," "to find the path," and to "discover the traces," in other words, the vestigio, from the Latin vestigium or "trace." Any approach which claims to be critical and scientific, but which does not meet these .conditions, does not merit to be called investigation or research

If one wishes to identify scholars who seek to subvert Islam, it is quite simple: their works have the sole purpose of reinforcing the belief in "Islamic fundamentalism." As a result of their myopic approach, they refuse to examine any evidence that might lead to a rectification or refutation of the concept in question, replacing the inexact term with one of greater precision. In other words, the approach of these scholars is biased from the beginning. Rather than being empirical from the beginning, letting the facts lead them to a conclusion, they commence their research with a thesis they seek to confirm at any cost. .In science, the theory needs to fit the facts

In pseudo-science, the facts are made to fit the theory. When studying Islam, many scholars collect evidence to support their hypothesis that Muslims are "fundamentalists," failing to pursue other possibilities that might invalidate their arguments. As can be appreciated, this is not the approach of a scientist. It is the approach of a dogmatic .fanatic: one who holds on to his dogma at all cost, refusing to examine other avenues

When it comes to describing a social reality, sociology and political science already have a large body of technical terms. These words gain credibility through their use in the daily press which loads them with popular notions, giving rise to substantial interference. Considering this rich body of terminology, it is inconceivable that there does not exist a noun which can describe the phenomenon knows erroneously as “fundamentalism.” Of all religions, Islam is the tradition which is the most opposed to the literal interpretation of Scripture. It opposes any reading of the Qur’an which does not consider the various layers of meaning and their interrelationship. The Qur’an itself is opposed to literal exegesis. As the Prophet Muhammad explained, the Qur’an has seven layers of meaning, and each of these seven levels contain numerous other levels of meaning which help interpret the others.[٩] Both Sufi and Shi‘ite Gnostics share this point of view.

Since Sufism and Shi‘ism are both spiritual branches of Islam, they are the ones that least deserve the groundless label of “fundamentalism.” None of these two branches of Islam engage in a dry literalist interpretation of the Scripture or the Prophetic Traditions and neither of them adopt characteristics of Catholic political conservatism known as integrismo. Islamic activists are not “fundamentalists.” With the exception of the Wahhabis, they are not literalists. Islamic activists are not opposed to science and modernity. They are opposed to secularism. Merely because they are opposed to liberalism does not mean that they are conservatives. They are political and economic centrists. If one does not wish to accept our proposal to replace the term “fundamentalist” with that of “traditional principialists,” then it would suffice to simply refer to them as “traditionalists.” Islamic activists are traditional Muslims who advocate a re-rooting in the principles of faith.

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Our goal in writing this preface to the English edition is to call for greater accuracy in socio-political, religious, and philosophical terminology. Besides providing a proper definition for the term "fundamentalism," we explained the nature of this religious phenomenon. We examined whether its application to Islam was justified and found that it was excessive. The term "fundamentalism," when applied to Islam, simply fails to distinguish between radical reformist literalists like the Wahhabis and genuine Muslims, disenchanted with secularism and liberalism, who wish to defend the fundamentals of .faith of Islam from outside interference or distortion

We noted that the term "fundamentalist," traditionally applied to literalist Protestants, is now almost exclusively applied to radical, violent, and intolerant expressions of Islam, without analyzing the problem in depth. When properly contextualized, so-called "Islamic fundamentalism" is not a cause, it is an effect. It is not an action, it is a reaction. It is not aggressive, it is defensive. It is a response to centuries of Western colonialism and .cultural imperialism

As part of its anti-Islamic onslaught, the Western world tries and tests the patience of Muslims, deliberately provoking them by insulting their faith, its religious symbols, mocking their lifestyle, the values they most treasure, and even slandering the Prophet Muhammad. These provocations are not isolated incidents. They form part of a campaign to offend Muslim sensibilities organized by Western operatives and agents-provocateurs. Their purpose is two-fold. Their first goal is to determine the depth of commitment to Islam in a certain region, to see whether more political pressure needs to be placed or .whether it can be eased

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The second goal is to incite violent reactions from Muslims in order to depict them as intolerant and backwards. In most cases, Western media focuses exclusively on the effect, and not on the cause. In the event that they mention the cause, they never contextualize it. They trivialize the offence to make the reaction seem all the more absurd to Western readers and viewers. Western arrogance, with its notions of cultural supremacy towards traditional cultures continues to be a source of permanent conflict throughout the world. Unless people are Westernized in their attitude, attire, and lifestyle, they are condemned as backwards. This attitude of cultural superiority is no longer a simple prejudice. It has become a motive to encourage cultural, linguistic, and political .assimilation of the entire Islamic world

Many "progressive" Westerners are fascinated with showing off their "cultural superiority." They are fond of contrasting their "tolerance" with traditional cultures which, for the sole fact that they are not ostentatiously "modern," are deemed backwards. In the Western world, it suffices for a Muslim student to appear in public with some "ostentatious" religious symbol like the hijab to offend the sensibilities of a European .president

As soon as an incident like this comes to the fore, reactionary secular fundamentalists, the guardians of the flame of liberty which burns in the altar of modernity, rush forth in "the name of "democratic values." They rise up to show off their "progressive mentality

and their incomparable "cultural superiority." They pass laws suppressing the civil and religious liberties of Muslim women which, had they been passed by so-called "Islamic fundamentalists," would have been denounced as backwards and medieval when in fact the laws of modesty called for by Muslim activists are merely a normal defensive reaction .to so-called "progressive" and "modern" ideas

In the Western world, “freedom of expression,” “democracy,” “liberalism” and “secularism” have all been used as a double-edged sword. As the Native American saying goes: “The white man speaks with a forked tongue.” With the help of the mass media, terms like “freedom of expression,” “democracy,” “liberalism,” and “secularism” are a highly effective instrument. They serve to construct public opinion in accord with the interests of the powers that be, supporting or discrediting any movement in accord with .their interests

The Muslims of the world have long understood the hypocrisy of Western rhetoric. However, as Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadhlullah observed in the ۱۹۸۰’s, the West claims to defend human rights and international justice while violating them at home and abroad: “Human rights are for them, not us.” Proud of its double-speak and unveiled hypocrisy, the Western world demands the Islamic world to respect freedom of religion and freedom of conscience while at the same time denying those liberties to the Muslims living in their midst, by prohibiting “ostentatious displays of religious symbols.” If Muslims nations require women to cover themselves, it is denounced as an oppressive violation of human rights. If Western nations oblige Muslim women to uncover themselves, it is viewed as an act of progress. The double-standards of the Western world speak for .themselves

Safar ۱۴۲۷ H / March ۲۰۰۶

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Footnote

Editor’s Note: Take, for example, the depiction of Arabs and Muslims by Hollywood. In [۱] Reel Bad Arabs, a comprehensive study of nearly one thousand films, Jack Shaheen has documented the tendency to portray Muslim Arabs as Public Enemy ۱; brutal, heartless, uncivilized “others” bent on terrorizing civilized Westerners. Another older, but still useful, book is Edwar Sa‘id’s Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How we .See the Rest of the World

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Author's Note: The bibliography on this subject is extensive. Consequently, we shall [۲] limit ourselves to suggesting a few introductory titles. Regarding the psychological manipulation of public opinion, see: Schiller, H.I., Los manipuladores de cerebros, Ed. Gedisa, (Buenos Aires ۱۹۷۴); for the use of stereotypes to defend political interests and to construct public opinion, see the following classic work: Lipmann, W., Public Opinion, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (New York ۱۹۲۲). The latter work is available in a Spanish translation under the title of La opinión pública, Compañía Fabril Editora (Buenos Aires ۱۹۴۹). The third and eight parts are especially relevant. For more recent work on the topic, .(see: Price, V., Public Opinion, Sage Publications (Newbury Park, California, ۱۹۹۲

For a clear example of media manipulation used to influence public opinion, we need look no further than the treatment of the war in Iraq. The media coverage of this war by major broadcasting corporations like CNN highlights the way information is perverted by what Mattelart has labeled the "global democractic marketplace" in which the economic elite has become the political elite. During the Gulf War and the present Invasion of Iraq we have witnessed various strategies of disinformation and media manipulation. Information has been censured, altered, and even invented in order to manipulate public opinion. This transmission of falsified information could only have been made possible through the complicity of the media conglomerates and the military and political establishment. This has been highlighted by Susan L. Carruthers who denounced the fact that the Rendon Group was hired to organize the clandestine propaganda campaigns of the Pentagon. Cfr. Carruthers, S. L., The Media at War, Ed. Macmillan Press Ltd., (London, ۲۰۰۰), ۱۴۲-۴۳. She :says

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Indeed, to understand how television became 'Pentavision,' it is necessary to consider not just how negative dimensions of the management system prevented news media from reporting certain aspects of the war but how readily reporters succumbed to the positive side of news management, relaying event through the eyes, and in the terminology, of the military. [...] Euphemisms were the order of the day. Emitting a stream of 'bovine scatology' (one of Schwarzkopf's more colorful coinages, though applied by him to journalists' stupid questions rather than to the briefings) the briefer used opaque jargon to obscure reality, so that civilian casualties became 'collateral damage' while 'degrading capabilities' was the preferred substitution for bombing. For more on this issue, see: Mattelart, A., Historia de la utopía planetaria. De la ciudad profética a la .sociedad global, Ediciones Paidós Ibérica, (Barcelona ٢٠٠٠), ۴٣١-٣٢

Author's Note: Cfr. Chomsky, N. and Herman, E., Los guardianes de la libertad, Editorial [٣] :(Grijalbo-Mondadori, (Barcelona, ١٩٩٠

The mass media acts like a system of transmission of messages and symbols for the average citizen. Its function is to entertain and to inform as well as inculcating values, beliefs, and modes of behavior in people that will ensure that they integrate into the institutional structures of society. In a world in which wealth is concentrated and in which there are great conflicts of interest between the classes, the fulfillment of such a role .requires systematic propagation

Author's Note: Cfr. Habermas, J., Conciencia moral y acción comunicativa, Editorial [۴] .(Península, (Barcelona. ١٩٨۵

Author's Note: Cfr. Bachelard, G. La formation de l'esprit scientifique. Paris, Librairie [۵] philosophique Vrin, ١٩٩٩ (١ère édition : ١٩٣٨), chapitre ١er; ١٣-١۴: La science...s'oppose absolument à l'opinion. S'il lui arrive, sur un point particulier, de légitimer l'opinion, c'est pour d'autres raisons que celles qui fondent l'opinion; de sorte que l'opinion a, en droit, toujours tort. L'opinion pense mal; elle ne pense pas: elle traduit des besoins en connaissances. En désignant les objets par leur utilité, elle s'interdit de les connaître. On ne peut rien fonder sur l'opinion: Il faut d'abord la détruire. Elle est le premier obstacle à surmonter. Il ne suffirait pas, par exemple, de la rectifier sur des points particuliers, en maintenant... L'esprit scientifique nous Interdit d'avoir une opinion sur des questions que

.nous ne comprenons pas, sur des questions que nous ne savons pas formuler clairement

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Science...is absolutely opposed to opinion. If it happens to confirm opinion, it is based on] reasons other than opinion because opinion, in and of itself, is always wrong. Opinion does not think properly. It does not think for itself. Opinion turns need into knowledge. By designating objects on the basis of their need, opinion prevents a proper understanding of them. Nothing can be based on opinion: it must first be destroyed. Opinion is the first obstacle which must be surmounted. It would not suffice, for example, to correct some aspects of it at the moment... The scientific spirit forbids us from having an opinion on questions which we do not understand, on questions we do not even know how to [.formulate clearly

Authors' Note: S. Tomás, Summa Theol. I, XIII, ۸: Non est semper idem id a quo [۶] .imponitur nomen ad significandum, et id ad quod significandum nomen imponitur

Author's Note: Cfr. Vittor, L. A., "La Religión en el mundo contemporáneo: El [۷] fundamentalismo como encrucijada entre la tradición y la modernidad" en Enfoques. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Comunicación (Buenos Aires ۱۹۹۸), Año I, Nº ۴; ۱۱-۲۳; as well as "Situación actual del pensamiento tradicional en el mundo moderno" in

Enfoques: revista de ciencias sociales y comunicación, Año II, Nº ۵, (Buenos Aires ۱۹۹۹), ۱۱-۲۹; and especially "El Islam Ši'ita: Zprincipialismo tradicional o integrismo iraní? Una respuesta a Roger Garaudy," published in three parts in Enfoques. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Comunicación, en Enfoques. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Comunicación, (Buenos Aires ۲۰۰۱), Año III, Nº ۱۲; ۱۷-۳۵; Año IV, Nº ۱۳, (Buenos Aires ۲۰۰۲), ۱۱-۲۹ y Año IV, .Nº ۱۴ (Buenos Aires ۲۰۰۲), ۹-۲۵

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Editor's Note: Attempting to find an adequate term to describe the phenomenon [۸] ackwardly defined as "fundamentalism" is no easy task. The term "principalism" is already an accepted term in English, French, and Spanish, and refers to those who defend the principles of a scientific method or a philosophical or legal school. The term "revivalism," in its general sense of "reviving practices or ideas of an earlier time," might be suitable. A "revivalist," however, refers to "a preacher of the Christian Gospel" and can be used pejoratively. "Revivalism" is thus an inadequate term, not only because it alludes to evangelical movements, but because Corbin has used it to refer to sectarian movements like the Babis and the Baha'i who were opposed to Shi'ite Islam. The term "foundationalism" can also be discarded as it refers to any theory in epistemology that holds that beliefs are justified based on what are called basic beliefs. The Arabic term usuli conveys the sense of "foundationalist;" however, it is inextricably linked to the struggle between Shi'ite rationalists, the usuli, and the traditionalists or akhbari. Despite the fact that it is used in the field of bioethics and jurisprudence, with the sense of respect for beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice, the neologism "principialism" remains the most adequate term to describe "fundamentalist," "revivalist" and "activist" Islam. The author, of course, does not limit the term "principialism" to its ethical uses. In reality, by selecting the term "principialism," the author follows in the footsteps of French metaphysician René Guénon, a revert to Islam and naturalized Egyptian citizen, who took the name of 'Abdul Wahid Yahya. Guénon was the first to use the term "principial" to refer to the transcendental principals of faith which constitute the roots [usul] or pillars [arkan] of a traditional doctrine. By using the term "principialism," the author is echoing notions which are more metaphysical than they are legal, ethical or philosophical, although from a .traditional perspective none of these aspects exclude one another

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Author's Note: According to a hadith, the Prophet Muhammad said: "The Qur'an has a [۹] beautiful exterior and a profound interior" (Kulayni). He said that "The Qur'an has an inner dimension, and that inner dimenion has an inner dimension up to seven inner dimensions" (Kulayni). Other versions of the hadith explain that each of the seven levels has seventy to seven hundred levels. Each inner level is more profound than the previous one, yet each level contains and illuminates the others. According to some sources, each dot on the Arabic letters of the Qur'an contains ۷۰,۰۰۰ meanings. The numbers ۷, ۷۰, ۷۰۰, and ۷۰,۰۰۰ are symbolic in nature. They are used to indicate that the interpretation of the Qur'an is limitless and inexhaustible. Attempting to empty the Qur'an would be as absurd as attempting to empty the ocean in a glass. The Qur'an will always be protected for any ,such attempts eminating from literalist or Gnostic sectors. As Imam 'Ali has explained

There is no Qur'anic verse but it has four meanings: an outer one [al-zahir], an inner one [al-batin]; a limit [hadd] and a divine designation [mutlaq, lit. "something which is absolute"]. The outer meaning is for oral recitation. The inner meaning is for in-depth understanding. The limit determines the legal and the illegal. The divine design is what .Allah proposes to achieve in humankind by means of each verse

:The Sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, said that

The Divine Book contains four modes: enunciated expression ['ibarat], allusion [isharat]; hidden meanings relating to the subtle word [lata'if], and elevated metaphysical truths [haqa'iq]. The enunciated expression is the one which applies to all believers

awamm]; the allusion concerns the spiritual elite [khawass]; the hidden meanings are’] the domain of the awliyya’ Allah [the Holy Friends of the Divine]; and the elevated .[‘metaphysical truths belong to the Prophets [anbiyya

INTRODUCTION THE ISSUE AT HAND

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In a concise chapter dealing with Shi‘ism, Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb echoes a persistent prejudice: the categorical affirmation that Shi‘ite Islam with respect to Sunni Islam, is “the other main sect of Islam--the only important schismatic sect.”[١] To him, Shi‘ism is the ubi consistam [essence] of the definition of sect which, according to his understanding, embraces diverse “systems of Islamic doctrines and beliefs which are generally repudiated by the orthodox...as heretical” (٨١). To speak of “heresy in Islam, however, requires a sufficiently clear understanding of its meaning.[٢] When Gibb uses the word “heretical,” however, he does not use it as descriptive adjective nor is he necessarily making a value judgment. For him, it is merely a matter of fact which needs to be analyzed. The most disturbing aspect of this conception of Shi‘ism, however, is not the simplistic explanation it gives to its historical development, but rather its excessively .broad scope. It does not say anything for want of saying too much

Gibb attempts to give a broad definition of “sect” and “heresy,” applying it to everything in Islam that remotely resembles other Eastern traditions. The evidence he provides, however, is far too scarce. He insists on demonstrating, at any cost, that Shi‘ism is inherently schismatic and sectarian. He uses the literary elasticity of the word “sect” [in English] to explain that Shi‘ite Islam, due to its minority status in the Muslim world, must constitute a doctrinal off-shoot or a split from the Islamic majority. At the same time, he wishes to prove that true “orthodoxy” is to be found almost exclusively in the Sunni doctrinal tradition.[٣] The erroneous application of the term “sect” to Shi‘ite Islam, however, does not resolve the problem of its historical origin. A true understanding of Shi‘ite Islam cannot be obtained through insufficient scholarship. It can only be reached through a close analysis of its religious and spiritual psychology as manifested in the .Islamic world

The definition of Shi'ism as the only "sect" of Islam is due in part to its more profound esoteric character which stands in contrast to the essentially exoteric character of Sunni Islam.[۴] Although there are no substantial differences between the fundamentals of faith of Shi'ite and Sunni Islam, Shi'ism seems to possess something more profound [in the spiritual realm]. [Despite this fact,] Western scholars tend to view the differences between Shi'ite and Sunni Islam as the result a mere political dispute relating to the succession of the Prophet Muhammad rather than a transcendental metaphysical matter.[۵] [However,] it is only through an understanding of the mystical dimension of Shi'ism that one can understand why it appealed to Hindus and Persians while at the same time [some of] the Arabs viewed it with reticence. In fact, even when some scholars stubbornly persist on calling Shi'ism an "Aryan Persian creation[۶]," history is clear on the issue: Shi'ism was introduced into Persia in the ۱۶th century by a Turkish dynasty, the Safavids, who were, as is well known, a tariqah or Sufi brotherhood.[۷] Until then, the Persians were mainly Sunnis. Shi'ism was only unanimously accepted among them ten centuries after the death of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and the events that contributed to the creation of Shi'ism.[۸]

We are not going to get down to details at this point. For now, what needs to be stressed is the perfectly orthodox nature of Shi'ite Islam and its reality as an integral part of the Islamic revelation.[۹] This fact is so clearly manifest that it cannot be overlooked on the basis of tendencious historical arguments that insist on confining Shi'ism within the imprecise bounds of concepts like "sect" or "heresy." [In this aspect], modern Western criticism of Shi'ism is unjustified and misguided. Contrary to the common views of Orientalists, Shi'ite Islam is not a "sect," a "heterodox" form of Islam or anything else that fits into the definition made by Gibb or any other specialist.[۱۰]

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One of the most common mistakes made by Orientalists is the attempt to study Shi'ite Islam on the basis of such simplified sectarian parameters. It is all the worst when this approach reinforces the argument that Shi'ism is the result of a separation, when this Western concept of religious schism is totally alien to traditional Islamic thought. If we wish to move beyond these objections against the orthodoxy of Shi'ite Islam, we should first note that Westerners often consider Islam, in contrast to the multifarious branches of Christianity,[١١] as a conglomerate of mutually contradictory doctrines which is patently not the case. We are not claiming that real differences never existed within Islam . They did indeed exist, particularly during its initial period between the seventh and tenth .centuries

It was then that a great variety of philosophical, theological and theosophical theories started to manifest themselves in all areas of Islamic thought. These different ideological currents that flourished were not "sects" in the true sense of the term and are most adequately called "schools of thought."[١٢] While some of them survived to the present, most of them have disappeared, leaving us only their names.[١٣] In any case, we must not overlook the process of cultural and ideological interaction which takes place when Islam comes into contact with foreign cultures. Such contact is an important aspect of what differentiates the Islamic tradition from others. Although there are many traditions within the tradition, Islam has always maintained its cohesion and unity, a fact that often draws .the attention of outside observers

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Although Islam is united, it is not uniform. The sciences studied in any traditional civilization--namely, a civilization based on divine revelation--depend on the metaphysical principles and the religious fundamentals of that revelation. Consequently, Islamic doctrines, regardless of their modes of expression, have always reflected and echoed the central doctrine of divine unity [tawhid]. It is due to the centrality of tawhid that Islam was capable of integrating various systems of thought into its perspective and final objective. The presence of diversity within the Islamic tradition does not undermine its transcendence and interior unity. Rather, as Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains, it is the means that assures the spiritual unity in a world composed of a conglomerate of diverse cultures, languages and races (Shi'ite Islam ۳-۲۸). It is in this sense that it is appropriate to speak of sects. In order avoid any possible misunderstandings, however, it is essential to [clarify the sense of the term.[۱۴

Footnote

Editor's Note: The author quotes from the Spanish translation. For the original English, [۱] ".see H.A.R. Gibb's Mohammedanism, especially chapter ۷ "Orthodoxy and Shi'ism

Author's Note: The book is not very favorable towards Islam. For starters, it defines Islam as "Mohammedanism" when it is well known that Islam does not demand a personal .adherence to the Prophet like that of Christianity towards Jesus

Editor's Note: As Massignon explains: "If Christianity" is fundamentally the acceptance and imitation of Christ before the acceptance of the Bible, Islam on the contrary is the acceptance of the Qur'an before the imitation of Muhammad, as the Prophet himself .(explicitly declared" (۹۴-۹۵

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Author's Note: Like some modern Muslim authors, the only thing that Gibb retains from [۲] Shi'ite Islam is that it is a religious minority whose historical development has been, to a certain extent, interpreted as a "heresy," although without the annoying nuance that word has acquired in the West. Be that as it may, none of the many schools of Islam are willing to accept such a label, particularly as it is understood by Westerners, with all of its pejorative connotations. If, under certain circumstances, anyone has labeled himself as a "heretic," it has been as an act of opposition against all "heretics," those who have made "order" out of their own "disorder," considering it an "orthodox" norm. Shi'ism is a reaction, if we can say so, against those who have become "disordered." It can thus be seen as a "disorder" which attacks the previous "disorder" in order to reestablish the old original order, from which the Muslim majority has become "separated." On this basis, it can be understood why Imam al-Shafi'i called himself a "heretic" (rafidi, from the Arabic "rejecter") when he declared that "If loving the Family of Muhammad is 'heresy'...May the Two Precious Treasures testify that I am a 'heretic'!" (in kana hubbu ali Muhammad rafdun fa ushhidu al- thaqalayni anni rafidi). One can be a "heretic" with respect to another "heresy" as in the case of Prophet Abraham who, according to Islamic tradition, confessed to being a "heretic." The same applies to Muhammad with respect to the .idolaters

Editor's Note: With its balance between the exoteric and the esoteric, Shi'ism can also be viewed as the true legacy of complete Islam which reestablishes its function in the face of incomplete Islam which is either legalistic in the cases of Sunnism or spiritual in the case .of Sufism

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Editor's Note: Merely because Shi'ites are a minority does not mean that Shi'ism is [۳] heterodox. Tijani argues that the Shi'ites are representatives of Islamic orthodoxy and that they are followers of the prophetic Sunnah [Tradition]. See, The Shi'ah: The Real Followers of the Sunnah / al-Shi'ah hum Ahl al-Sunnah. In Shi'ite eyes, the Imams are the personification of the Sunnah. They are al-sirat al-mustaqim [the straight path], al-'urwa al-wuthqa [the insoluble bond] nur Allah al-Hadi [the guiding light of Allah] al-imam wa al-Islam [the faith, Islam] wa al-sunnah wa al-salam [the prophetic tradition and peace]. The author of this book, Luis Alberto Vittor, does not make an exclusive claim to orthodoxy; rather, he recognizes the orthodox nature of mainstream Sunni and Shi'ah Islam. This is the same position taken by Seyyed Hossein Nasr who writes that "Shi'ism and Sufism are both, in different ways and on different levels, intrinsic aspects of Islamic orthodoxy" (Sufi Essays ۱۰۴-۱۰۵). According to Nasr, Sunnism and Twelve-Imam Shi'ism stand in the middle of the spectrum of Islam as far as orthodoxy and heterodoxy are concerned (The Heart of Islam ۸۶). In Western studies, however, "orthodoxy is limited to its exoteric aspect" (۸۶) which is inadequate as "[t]here is an exoteric orthodoxy and orthopraxy and there is an esoteric orthodoxy and orthopraxy" (۸۶). Exoterically, in practice, Wahhabis and Kharijites are orthodox. Esoterically, in spirit, in scriptural interpretation, they might be viewed as heterodox my mainstream Sunnis and Shi'ites. If they are hostile towards the Ahl al-Bayt and their followers, Shi'ites would view them as heretical. So long as they observe the shari'ah, the Sufis and the Isma'ilis are orthodox. In orthopraxy, there is no objection against the Ahmadiyyah. It is in their 'aqidah [creed], their belief in a prophet after Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah, where their heresy lies. The Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Islam, the Five Percenters, the Ansar, and other cults, are evidently outside the .fold of Islam in 'aqidah [creed], orthodoxy, and orthopraxy

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Editor's Note: As Nasr notes, "the esoteric dimention of Islam…in the Sunni climate is [۴] .(almost totally connected with Sufism" (Sufi Essays ۱۰۵

Editor's Note: This is also the attitude of many Sunni scholars. As Sayyid Muhammad [۵] :Rizvi summarizes

In the polemical writings of the Sunnis, it is asserted that Sunni Islam is "orthodox Islam" whereas Shi'ism is a "heretical sect" that began with the purpose of subverting Islam from within. This idea is sometimes expressed by saying that Shi'ism began as a political (movement and later on acquired religious emphasis. (Chapter ۱

As Jafri explains, "It is…difficult to speak, at any stage of its existence, about the 'political' Shi'ah as distinct from the 'religious' one" (۲). The historian Matti Moosa acknowledges that "Shi'ism, or the support of 'Ali, grew in the early period of Islam as a spiritual movement, based on the assumption that the leadership of the Muslim community was a spiritual office and that 'Ali had been singled out from among all Muslims to fill it" (xv). :Moosa confirms that

It was in the time of 'Uthman that the term Shi'ite, which until then had had only a spiritual connotation, began to assume a political significance. Those supporting 'Ali became known as the Shi'ites [partisans] of 'Ali, while those supporting 'Uthman became (known as the Shi'ites [partisans] of 'Uthman. (xv

The faction of 'a'ishah and Zubayr [called the "People of the Camel" or ashab al-jamal] .(and the Syrians [ahl al-Sham] were also known as the shi'at Mu'awiyyah (Jafri ۹۵-۹۶

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Editor's Note: As Massignon explains, "the theorists deny the authenticity of Islamic [۶] mysticism, which is portrayed as a form of the racial, linguistic, and national reaction by the Aryan peoples, particularly the Iranians, against the Arab Islamic conquest. Renan, P. de Lagarde, and more recently Reitzenstein, Blochet, and E.G. Browne, have helped to .(spread this theory" (۴۶

Editor's Note: The Safavids were a dynasty that ruled Persia from ۱۵۰۱ to ۱۷۳۶. Founded [۷] by Isma'il, leader of the safawi Sufi brotherhood, they imposed Twelver Shi'ism as their state religion for political purposes. At a time when various Muslim groups were vying for power, each claiming the right to rule, the Twelvers did not present a political threat since Imam Mahdi was in Occultation and would only return towards the end of the world. The spread of Shi'ism also helped protect the Safavids from the Ottoman threat to the West and from the Uzbeks from the East. The Safavid period was a golden age for Shi'ite scholarship and produced such prolific scholars as 'Allamah Majlisi, author of Bihar al-anwar. While this work is monumental in size, it is flawed in many aspects: ۱) the author was unable to review it and correct it; ۲) it is an exceedingly late compilation of traditions; and ۳) it contains an enormous quantity of false and fabricated traditions. Despite the author's enormous and commendable effort, the work has been given undue importance in recent times. Contemporary Iranian scholars have warned readers about this work, reminding them that it should not be placed on par with other more complete and reliable books of hadith. While Majlisi planned to subject the traditions to critical analysis and due categorization, he died before being able to do so, and the subsequent editors of his work .have left it as such, without the editing it requires

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Editor’s Note: As Massignon explains, “In reality, Shi‘ism, which is presented to us as a [٨] specifically Persian Islamic heresy, was propagated in Persia by pure Arab colonists, who .(had come from Kufa to Qum” (۴۶

All of the ٣,٠٠٠ tawwabun were Arabs (Jafri ٢٣٢). For more on the falsity of the Persian .origin or Shi‘ism, see Tijani’s Then I was Guided ١۵٨-۵٩

Editors’ Note: As Nasr has observed, “The reality of Shi‘ism and Sufism as integral [٩] aspects of the Islamic revelation is too dazzlingly clear to be ignored or explained away .(on the basis of a tendencious historical argument” (Sufi Essays ١٠۴

Editor’s Note: Nasr is correct when he states that “One should never refer to Shi‘ism [١٠] as a whole as sect, any more than one would call the Greek Orthodox Church a sect” (Heart of Islam ٨٧). As Jafri explains, “In the infant years of Islamic history, one cannot speak of the so-called ‘orthodox’ Sunnah and the ‘heretical’ Shi‘ah, but rather of two ill-defined points of view that were nevertheless drifting steadily, and finally irreconciliably, .(further apart” (٢

Editor’s Note: Christianity is divided into three major branches: Roman Catholicism, [١١] Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism. There are further subdivided into rites and sects .which number in the thousands

.(The Holy Qur’an criticizes the schisms of the Jews and Christians (٩٨:۴; ١٠:٩٣

Editor’s Note: The Arabic term for “school” is madhhab. In Islam, there are numerous [١٢] schools of jurisprudence, schools of recitation of Qur’an, schools of Qur’anic commentary, schools of prophetic traditions, and schools of philosophy, rendering the Wahhabi refutation of madhahibs senseless. The Islamic intellectual tradition was one of tolerance. The early Muslims argued with the best arguments, following the commandment of Allah: “Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance” (١۶:١٢۵). While there were thousands of rays of reason, they all radiated from the same sun of tawhid. The Prophet and the Imams debated and discussed in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance with Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Manicheists, polytheists and atheists. As

Nasr explains, “On the basis of the Qur’anic doctrine of religious universality and the vast historical experiences of a global nature, Islamic civilization developed a cosmopolitan and worldwide religious perspective unmatched before the modern period in any other religion” (The Heart of Islam ۴۰). The decline of Islamic civilization and culture is, in part, the result of the imposition of official orthodoxies. The exponential growth of science and scholarship in the early days of Islam was cut short when freedom of thought was suppressed and dogmas came to dominate. The phenomenon of rapid evolution that came about through Islam applied to exegesis, jurisprudence, grammar and a whole host of sciences. W.F. Albright’s description of “cultural revolution” easily applies to Islam: “When a culture is replaced by another culture we almost always note a sudden change, a real mutation, with changes taking place in one generation which under normal circumstances would take a millennium” (۸۸).

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Editor’s Note: The existing schools of Sunni jurisprudence include the Hanafi, Shafi‘i, [۱۳] Maliki and Hanbali. Other no longer extant Sunni schools of fiqh include the ²ahiri school from al-Andalus, the Jariri school founded by Tabari; and the schools of al-Azwa‘i, Hasan al-Basri, Abu ‘Uyaynah, Ibn Abi Dhu‘ayb, Sufyan al-Thawri, Ibn Abi Dawud, and Layth ibn .Sa‘d, among others

Editor’s Note: The author is alluding to Descartes’ statement: “I will not argue with you [۱۴] “.unless you define your terms

CHAPTER ۱

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF HETERODOXY IN ISLAM

The word “sect” comes from the Latin sequi or sequor and means “to follow.” According to this definition, the term excludes the idea of schism or doctrinal rupture. In Christian usage, the term “sect” is not free from pejorative connotations although it is much better than the label “heretic.” Nowadays, in Christian terminology, the word “sect” refers mostly to a body of people sharing religious opinions who have broken away from a larger body. “Sect” in the sense of “cult” refers to a group of people who follow the “revelations” made by its founder. Such sects, like the Mormons for example, differ from the Church, in the non-theological sense of the term, in that they recognize another new revelation. The sect insists on the need to understand the neo-testamentary text which is different in essence from the sacred scriptures.[۱] Besides that distinction, and as can be observed within the Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses Witnesses" , the cult believes in collective, [not individual salvation, which is exclusively limited to its members.[۲

It must be understood, however, that the sects which the Church opposes in the name of orthodoxy are merely other religions with their own rites and dogmas which are only heretical with respect to official orthodoxy. If we attempt to remove the slippery polish from the word "sect," turning it into a simple technical term devoid of subjectivity, we will see that "the meaning of sect is closer to the Spanish word séquito [group of followers, adherents and devotees] than to what is commonly understood by secta [sect] and its derivative sectario [sectarian] which curiously and arbitrarily are applied to it" (García [Bazán ۱۱۴-۱۸).[۳

A persistent residue, which has adhered to the word "sect" by use and Abuse, has been regularly documented. In its common meaning, it applies to exclusivist religious minorities which are opposed to a commonly accepted Church tenet. Sects are born through dissent and view themselves as a small flock of chosen ones. This is how quantitative differences come about between Church and sect. For the Western religious historian, what defines a sect is its character as a separate group, much more than its minority status, which can eventually reach the size of a Church. This is where we see the motives which drive Western religious historians like Gibb to come up with unilateral interpretations of .complex concepts and doctrines

They explain and analyze them in terms that prevent the possibility of truly understanding what a sect or religion, such as Islam, really represents.[۴] It can never be sufficiently stressed that the general application of Western terms like "orthodoxy," "heterodoxy," "church" and "sect" to Islam are grossly misapplied, especially as Islam does not have a Church to define orthodoxy or the powers to excommunicate.[۵] The use of such terms ends up simplifying complex issues, associating them with Western religious phenomena which do not have equivalents in the language of Islam. There is no place for such terms as "orthodoxy, "heterodoxy," "church," "sect," and "heresy" in an [Islamic tradition rooted in the concept of divine unity.[۶

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While there is diversity within Islam, there is not, simply by a slight difference in approach, a contradiction of its central doctrine of divine unity nor the gregarious separation in its fundamentals of faith or its community [ummah]. Rather, they are diverse tendencies that make up Islam and so long as they do not stray from the fundamentals of faith, they can all claim with some justification to represent its most authentic expression.[٧] With this understanding, one can appreciate that in Islam there does not exist a clear line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. As a result, the various Islamic currents are neither radically misguided groups which have broken from official orthodoxy nor are they separated from .one another as are the Christian sects of today

Unlike the Western world, the Islamic world defines orthodoxy by means of the profession of faith or shahadah: La ilaha illa Allah / Muhammadun rasul Allah [There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah]. The shahadah is the most universal proclamation of divine unity and is not a strictly defined theological formula. There exists, of course, an orthodoxy in Islam, without which no doctrine or tradition is possible. However, contrary to Gibb's affirmation, Islamic orthodoxy has not been defined by ijma' [scholarly consensus] in any restricted or limited sense. What is more, in Islam there has never existed a religious institution capable or deciding who is orthodox [and who is not.[٨

Infatuated with every Western prejudice, Gibb seems to have translated the old axiom of divide et impera [divide and conquer] into the more modern: classify and discard! But to understand the history of Islam, however, requires more than merely counting or organizing dates. The eye of the scholar must be capable of discerning the profound print of his subject, its depth, its substance and its essence. He must belong to a tradition and provide us with comprehensive and broad formulas called critical approaches and methodologies. Gibb easily forgets that in Islam, so long as a practice or a belief does not contravene the shari'ah [Islamic law] and can be traced back to the Qur'an and the .sunnah it is clearly orthodox and cannot be deemed heretical

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This principle also applies to the genuine spiritual paths of Islamic mysticism [tasawwuf] in the Sunni world whose devotional practices and metaphysical doctrines cannot be judged on the criteria of "orthodoxy" that govern the exoteric forms of the religion. This is particularly so since the esoteric can never face the exoteric on the same plane. Both operate on different but not divergent orders of the same reality.[۹] In other words, they .constitute the "core" [al-lubb] and the "skin" [al-qishrah] of the religion

In Nahj al-balaghah [The Path of Eloquence]--a collection of sermons, epistles, and aphorisms of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib compiled by Sharif al-Razi (۴۰۶/۱۰۱۵)--the First Imam most brilliantly and masterfully settles the question of the diversity of schools and currents in Islamic thought. He describes them as parts of the spiritual freedom given by God which [are in accord with His Oneness:[۱۰

Praise be to Allah who established Islam and made it easy for those who approach it and gave strength to its columns against any one who tries to overpower it ... It is the most bright of all paths, the clearest of all passages. It has dignified minarets, bright highways, (burning lamps, prestigious fields of activity, and high objective. (Sermon ۱۰۵: ۲۴۹

This Islam is the religion which Allah has chosen for Himself ... He made Islam such that its constituent parts cannot break, its links cannot separate, its construction cannot fall, its columns cannot decay ... It consists of columns whose bases Allah has fixed in truthfulness, and who foundation He has strengthened, and of sources whose streams are ever full of water and of lamps, whose flames are full of light, and of beacons with (whose help travelers get guidance. (Sermon ۱۹۷: ۴۰۸

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As one can gather from these words, the Islamic tradition has, in a general sense, provided a broad umbrella which embraces a multiplicity of points of view as distinct as the doctrinal masters of thought who formulated them. The only tension between them-- when there was any at all--has normally been between the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of the tradition. This tension has always alternated harmoniously within the .same dynamic rhythm

The temporal predominance of one over the other in the successive manifestations of the same living organism is comparable to the diastole and the systole of the heartbeat. Without alternation, these two essential movements continue in harmony, like the exoteric and the esoteric. Like any other tradition, Islam would cease to beat without them and would turn into a rigid form without a pulse.[١١] In other words, the orthodoxy of the distinct schools of thought in Islam does not manifest itself solely through the preservation of its outer forms. It is expressed equally by its natural development and, especially, by its capacity to absorb any spiritual expression which is not essentially alien [to the doctrine of divine unity.[١٢

It is true that in Islam there is what in the language of the West is defined as "sect." The word "sect" in Arabic is firqah which comes from the Arabic farraqa which means "to separate" and "to divide." Let us not make the mistake, however, of considering Sunni and Shi'ite Islam as the two main sects of Islam. Let us not differentiate between them by applying normative and schematic judgments to decide, unilaterally, in accord with the mental and moral modes of historically European-based societies, which one of them is "orthodox" and which one is "heterodox." If we have acknowledged that there is diversity in There is only Islam and what is not Islam. As Hector Abu Dharr Manzolillo explains in his article "La filosofía de Abu Sufyan," Abu Sufyan no veía ni entendía cual era la misión de Muhammad (tenéis ojos pero no veis, tenéis oídos pero no oís, como decía Jesús). Lo único que veía y entendía era que la religión daba poder mundanal que era lo que él .quería

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Abu Sufyan could not understand the mission of Muhammad. As Jesus, peace be upon] him, used to say, "You have eyes but you can't see. You have ears but you can't hear." Likewise, the only thing that Abu Sufyan could understand was that religion leads to [.worldly power, which was exactly what he wanted

Islam we need to recognize that there is also a means to understand its unity. The unity of Islam rests on one sole factor: the uninterrupted event of the Qur'anic revelation. In synthesis, the oneness of God and Islam is manifested in every aspect of its doctrinal reach in the affirmation of divine unity [tawhid], the proclamation that the beginning of existence is one as ratified by the apothegm al-tawhidu wahidun: "the doctrine of oneness is one." For Islam, divine unity constitutes the only raison d'être [reason for being] and the essential criteria upon which all "orthodoxy" is based, regardless of its contingent modes of expression. We can go further and affirm that, as far as Islamic thought is concerned, the doctrine of "divine unity" is the common denominator shared by all traditional monotheistic faiths without exception, so long as they adhered to pure and original monotheism.[١٣] We can expand upon this more and proclaim that the universal and the continuous in all things operate through this Unique Principle which invariably is .everywhere and always identical to Itself

The great metaphysical currents from east and west unanimously agree that the ultimate reality of all things, the essential state of all creatures, their beginning and their return, is divine unity.[١۴] In this sense, this Islamic concept runs parallel to those of Xenophanes, Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus.[١۵] It runs parallel with those of Judaism, Taoism and Buddhism as well as those of the Advaita Vedanta Vedanta" formulated by Master Sankara, Master" as a recapitulation of the Veda which, according to Muslim Gnostics, is the revelation God made to Adam.[١۶] This also applies to Alexandrine hermeticism--to the extent that it is a continuation of the tradition of Hermes or Idris, as [he is known in the Islamic world--which is also embraced and integrated into Islam.[١٧

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The truth of the One Absolute, the identification of all things with a Sole Beginning, was revealed by the Qur'an for Islam in the form of the shahadah .[۱۸] The divine profession of faith stresses that "He is Allah, the One and Only" (۱۱۲:۱), "there is no god but Allah" (۴۷: ۱۹) and that "He has no partners" [wahdahu la sharika lahu] or, as the chapter "Divine Unity" [surat al-tawhid] or "Purity of Faith" [surat al-ikhlas] declares, "there is none like unto Him" [wa lam yakun lahu kufu'an ahad] (۱۱۲:-۴). To be considered as orthodox, Islam requires a true and sincere belief in monotheism.[۱۹] The contrary of tawhid is shirk: the attribution of partners or associates to God, idolatry and polytheistic paganism. Shirk is a mortal sin without possibility of pardon.[۲۰] It is heresy incarnate which is why the Qur'an warns: "Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin Most heinous [indeed" (۴:۴۸).[۲۱

For Islam, the essential element which guarantees true orthodoxy is the belief in "monotheism." This applies not only to its own schools of thought or spiritual paths, but also to any traditional religion prior to Islam.[۲۲] The term "monotheism," however, is inadequate when it comes to translating the sense of al-tawhid. The word "monotheism" can only be used to accommodate the lack of a better term in English and other Western languages, without giving it an exclusively religious connotation. The doctrine of "divine unity" is essentially metaphysical in the true and original sense of the term. But in Islam, as in other traditions, it also implies--in its direct application to diverse contingent domains--a whole network of complicated and interlacing parts. These parts, within Islam, are not necessarily incompatible, despite their respective characters, as they are in the West since in Islam there is no division between the functions of "religion" and ".“state

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Islam is a complete civilization and a complex culture in which all activities and spheres of daily life, individual, societal and governmental must reflect divine unity.[۲۳] Islam is not merely a "religion" if by religion one exclusively means an ecclesiastic system of belief and practice. More than that, Islam is a way of life with a faith or, if one wants, a traditional way of life [din] which, through the Qur'an, the sunnah and the shari'ah, proclaims a faith and establishes rituals. It also prescribes an established social order on the basis of the "fundamentals of faith" or the "pillars of Islam" [arkan al-islam] for individuals and society in all areas that determine the condition and the raison d'être [reason for being] of the orthodox Muslim. An orthodox Muslim, as we have seen, is anyone who is sincere in his .faith

A ۲۰th century Gnostic, al-Shaykh al-'Alawi from Mostagan, a qutb or spiritual pole of Sunni Islam of the Shadhili school,[۲۴] said that to be an orthodox Muslim it is sufficient to observe five things: to believe in God and recognize Muhammad as his final prophet, perform the five daily prayers, give the prescribed alms to the poor, fast and make the pilgrimage to Mecca (Lings ۲۳).[۲۵] The arkan al-islam or pillars of Islam, as a whole, are the formal expression of Islam and encompass everything which Western language designates as strictly religious.[۲۶] The pillars of Islam also include all of the social and legislative realms which in the Islamic world integrate into the religion. Hence, the Western concept of separation between "religion" and "state" is something foreign to .orthodox Islamic thought

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Besides these five fundamentals of faith there are five other pillars of religion [usul al-din] according to Shi'ite Islam which are in conformity with the sunnah of the Prophet.[٢٧] They include tawhid, the belief in divine unity; nubuwwah, the belief in the prophecy; mi'ad,[٢٨] the belief in resurrection and the hereafter; imamah, the Imamate, the belief in the twelve Imams as successors of the Prophet and depositories of his wilayah [guardianship], the spiritual and temporal power of Islam and; 'adl or divine justice. Sunnis and Shi'ites agree upon the three basic pillars, namely, tawhid, nubuwwah and .mi'ad. They only differ on the other two

In terms of the Imamate, what distinguishes the Shi'ite perspective from the Sunni one is the insistence on the esoteric function and spiritual supremacy of the Imam. In Sunni Islam, this difference is formerly overcome through gnosis [ma'rifah or 'irfan] of Sufism [tasawwuf] in which the qutb or spiritual pole of the age represents the esoteric and initiatory role that the Imam plays in Shi'ism.[٢٩] In terms of 'adl or divine justice what distinguishes Shi'ism is the stress given to this attribute as an essential quality of the divine reality. In its concept of divine justice, Shi'ism considers this aspect as co-substantial with divinity.[٣٠] God cannot act unjustly because it is impossible for the Just to .be unjust. There can be no division or contradiction in the One

Finally, despite their external differences, Sunnis, Shi'ites and Sufis share a stress on practice and conduct as opposed to doctrine. The faithful observance of the fundamentals of faith is what lies at the center of their thought and differences. It is only on the esoteric plane that every religious perspective can be placed so long as it does not contradict the transcendental unity which goes beyond any such limitations. It is this unity which is found in the external expressions of each religion or theological school. The transcendental unity of all religions is not broken in any way by the transcendence of Islam.[٣١] Such unity is not a material extension and gradual development but rather the [fundamental identity of the One within the multiple.[٣٢

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Even if it varies to infinity, it responds in different ways to the needs of different human cultures and races.[۳۳] For this reason, the establishment of "orthodoxy" in Islam, based on uniformity instead of unity, as it exists with other religious forms, especially in the West, could never depend on the ijma' or the consensus of scholars. Gibb's reductionist doctrine wishes to liken Islamic ijma' to the "councils of the Christian Church" (۹۰). It is only the metaphysical doctrine of unity which can reconcile all types of differences while maintaining the unity of the Islamic tradition, both exoteric and esoteric, over and above .any tension or conflict of a political or religious order

In this sense, Shi'ite Islam represents a balancing totality of various points of view. Due to the profoundly esoteric character of its doctrine, it represents a "middle path" between the excessive formal legalism of the jurists and the excessive introversion of the mystics.[۳۴] The tasawwuf, depository of gnosis in the Sunni world, can be defined [spiritually as the Shi'ism of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Fourth Caliph and First Imam of Islam.[۳۵

Both Sufism and Shi'ism, in accord with the traditions of the Prophet, view 'Ali as the "gate" of initiation to the esoteric knowledge [batin] of Muhammad who stated quite clearly: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate. Whoever wants to enter this city [must first pass through its gate."[۳۶

The symbol of the "gate" [in Arabic bab] alludes to the esoteric function of the First Imam since it is through him that one gains access to initiation [from the Latin inire or to "enter"]. Found in many traditions, the "gate" alludes to initiation into the Muhammadan "mysteries" or "secrets" [sirr].[۳۷] In its universal sense, the "gate" refers to the spiritual office as the "seal" of the absolute wilayah [guardianship] and the esoteric pole of the prophecy who has opened the cycle of initiation [da'irat al-wilayah] which, at the same time, has been sealed by the Twelfth Imam, al-Mahdi, who closes the Muhammadan .wilayah

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In short, the completion of the doctrinal legacy of Islam explains, as does the absence of any unanimously accepted human authority who has received spiritual and temporal power from the Most High, the rather indefinite character of the notion of orthodoxy outside of what is established by the Qur'an, the sunnah and the shari'ah. In specific, with the exception of the Mahdi, there does not exist in Islam a universally recognized magistrate capable of formulating new laws. The Ayatullahs [۳۸] [from the Arabic ayat, signs and Allah, God] which in our epoch appear more and more as the jurists [mujtahidun] and the depositories of the wilayat al-faqih,[۳۹] that is, the spiritual and political leadership of Shi'ite Islam, limit themselves to interpretation of the prescriptions and mandates of the Qur'an. They do so in accord with a tradition passed down from generation to generation by the Twelve Imams but with nuances and even considerable differences from one mujtahid to another.[۴۰] One thing that must be clarified as well is that when we speak of Shi'ism we refer to the ithna 'ashari or branch, also known as the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence.[۴۱]

The term Shi'ism embraces many branches, each with its own interpretation of Qur'anic doctrine. The term Sunnism embraces various exoteric branches, including the four most famous schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the Shafi'i, the Hanafi, the Hanbali and the Maliki. The term Sufism also embraces various branches. In the esoteric world of tasawwuf it is possible to distinguish spiritual paths [turuq] equal in number to the infinite variety of souls or beings.[۴۲] As Ibn Khaldun explains in his Muqaddimah [Prolegomenon], the profession of divine unity is the very secret [sirr] of these doctrines.[۴۳]

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So far, we have examined the fundamental ubi consistam [point of reference] of Islamic thought regarding the concept of "orthodoxy." Clearly, Shi'ite Islam must not be removed from this definition. Excluding Shi'ite Islam from the realm of Islamic orthodoxy--by omission or by excess--is one of the most common mistakes made by Western scholars who wish to give it a sectarian nature similar to reformist Christian sects. These scholars even go to the extreme of giving Shi'ism an allegedly "fundamentalist" character which, in the broadest sense, applies exclusively to certain forms of modern American .Protestantism

In present times, the term "fundamentalist" is commonly applied to Shi'ite Islam and to Islamic groups characterized by a rejection of all manifestation of secularism in the Eastern world.[۴۴] This is despite the fact that, in every sense, Shi'ism represents the living tradition of Islam.[۴۵] Both in politics and religion, Shi'ite Islam is traditional.[۴۶] When faced with outbreaks of innovation [bid'ah] Shi'ite Muslims, like all orthodox Muslims, react with the same hostility as any who face a subversive movement which seeks to overthrow the established order.[۴۷] Due to its imminently esoteric nature and its acceptance of diverse levels of interpretation of the scriptures--each one more profound than the other--Shi'ism is, in the Islamic world, what least resembles "fundamentalism" if [understood in its correct sense of extreme superficial and sterile literalism.[۴۸

It may be worthwhile to mention at this point that "fundamentalism" is a purely Christian term. It seems to have come into use at the beginning of the twentieth century and describes, first and foremost, certain American Protestant sects, particularly those with a puritanical perspective. The sects in question are noted for interpreting the scriptures to the letter of the law, from a narrow minded perspective. They reject any profound interpretation of the Bible, prohibiting any hint of hermeneutics. Notably, the term "fundamentalist" is now applied on a daily basis by many Muslims but stripped from the pejorative sectarian sense. Through a strange semantic distortion, they give the term the erroneous meaning and the distorted sense of a "return to the fundamentals" of the Islamic faith. They do so as if at some time in Islamic history, the arkan al-islam [pillars of Islam] had somehow ceased to exist, visibly or invisibly, in all spheres of Muslim existence .and in all their manifestations in the Islamic world

Even when they are relinquished or temporarily placed on the back burner--as in the atypical case of Turkey --they have always been fully maintained in the spiritual and esoteric order without which any return to original Islam is impossible.[۴۹] In this sense, the integral restoration of the true and original sense of the Revelation depends on the ta'alim [spiritual guidance] of the Imams, the fundamental touchstone of the illuminative awakening of Islamic gnosis. They are invested with the initiatory function due to their condition as divinely inspired men and perfect interpreters of His message, well beyond the literary and philosophical paraphrase of rationalist jurists and theological puritans like [Ibn Taymiyyah [۵۰] and those of 'Abd al-Wahhab.[۵۱

A return to the fundamentals implies that a distancing or a partial separation [firqah] from them has taken place. If returning to the founding principles of the Islamic faith is used in the sense of returning to the straight path, then this may very well require a reencounter with Shi'ite Islam since its doctrine has always remained firmly grounded in the teachings of the Imams who are effectively the arkan [pillars] par excellence.[۵۲] [In the Shi'i view,] the Imams are the fundamental pillars of Islam in the sense that the essence of the revelation was passed on to them by the Prophet, both exoterically and esoterically, through the function of the Imamate or spiritual inheritance ['ilm 'itri], that is, the esoteric .[guidance of the prophetic batin [secrets

According to the famous hadith al-kisa' [The Tradition of the Cloak], the Prophet called his daughter Fatimah along with 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn and covered them completely with his cloak.[۵۳] This act symbolized the transmission of the universal wilayah of the Prophet, through the epiphany [madhar] of the partial wilayah [wilayah fatimiyyah], to the plethora [of the Twelve Imams, the Prophet's immaculate progeny [ma'sumin].[۵۴

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Within the bounds of the excessively arid exteriorist “literalism” which defines Protestant fundamentalism, we can only include, in relation to Islam, the exceptional case of Wahhabism.[١] This obscure puritanical and reformist sect [firqah], derived from Sunni Islam’s strict Hanbali school of thought, was founded by Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, who can be called, without exaggeration, the Martin Luther of the Muslim World.[٢] His doctrine was inspired by the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah, a rationalist rigorist who opposed the ideas of Ibn ‘Arabi.[۵٧] ‘Abd al-Wahhab found his ideological support in the political opportunism of the upstart emir of the Dariya tribe, Muhammad Ibn Saud, the ancestor and founder of the actual Saudi dynasty which became the secular arm and executor of [Wahhabism.[۵٨

Like Luther with respect to Christianity, ‘Abd al-Wahhab called for a “return to the fundamentals” of faith. These, however, were reformulated literally and were stripped of the doctrinal complement brought by the teachings of the Imams and the exegetic and hermeneutical methods instituted by the Prophet as sacred sciences aimed at discerning the inner meanings of the scripture. A “return to the fundamentals” of Islam, as proposed by ‘Abd al-Wahhab, can only be brought about by the restorative action of the ta‘alim or esoteric guidance of Imam Mahdi, the Hidden and Awaited Imam, and never through [human initiative.[۵٩

We “return” [ta’wil] the revealed letter [tanzil] to the plane where it becomes real. The revelation [tanzil], according to Shi‘ite Islam, is both exoteric [dahir] and esoteric [batin]. The process of understanding consists in starting from the exoteric in order to reach the esoteric. Metaphysical internalization, the cornerstone of Islamic Gnosticism, tends to revive, in the symbolic articulation of the scripture, its profound spiritual sense as revealed by Angel Gabriel to the Prophet according to its original enunciation. Consequently, ta’wil, [the allegorical interpretation], is the “returning ascent,” the march up country [anabasis] of the dahir [exoteric] and the batin [esoteric].[۶٠] The mission of the

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Prophet was the founding of the dahir which implies a descent by the spirit to every [formal point of expression of the scripture.[۶۱

The mission or ta'alim of the Twelfth Imam al-Mahdi is to lead the dahir [exoteric] to the batin [esoteric] in our present cycle. This is why he is called sahib al-zaman [the Lord of the Age].[۶۲] In order for there to be a "return to the fundamentals" of Islam, it is also necessary for there to be a universal restoration of the esoteric sciences in all of their traditions. For that same metaphysical reason, it requires a man who, besides being inspired by God and being a perfect interpreter who masters the exoteric and the esoteric scripture, is a spiritual heir, an inheritor and direct descendant of the Prophet .from the line of Husayn, the Third Imam

According to Islamic metaphysics, which stems more or less directly from Shi'ism, the "heterodoxy" of any idea implies, in one way or another, the falsity of its formulations which are in absolute disagreement with the metaphysical and esoteric principles of the tradition. This is precisely what René Guénon[۶۳] warns of with respect to the Vedanta.[۶۴]According to this definition, orthodoxy lies in a constant balance between immutable principles. In the Islamic tradition, these principles are contained in the Qur'an. The balance between the letter and spirit of the revealed text constitutes the criteria of [Islamic orthodoxy which is founded on faith in the oneness of God.[۶۵

The discussion of Islamic sects would be worthwhile if the term was restituted, as García Bazán demands, to the original sense the Romans gave it when they translated the Greek word hairesis as "sect" (۱۱۴). The Greek word which has evolved into "heretic" merely means "selection," "option," or philosophical or religious "inclination" (۱۱۵-۱۷). It does not imply the idea of difference, separation or breaking from a tradition, nor does it possess the pejorative connotation that it has in Western languages. As García Bazán explains, even the middle form of haireo and haireomai, from which hairesis derives, simply means ".“selection” or “option

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In terms of Wahhabism, whose influence continues to be observed in Saudi Arabia and much of the Muslim world, "sectarian" deviations are not ritual or doctrinal: they are scriptural.[۶۶] With regards to the sacred text, the Wahhabi "heresy" consists in a deformation and literal reinterpretation of the Qur'anic text and even of innovation in the Islamic canon.[۶۷] They are "heretics" who are formally separated from the Islamic community, not by ritual practice, but by scriptural deviation.[۶۸] These rigid rigorist literalists adhere to the external aspect of the written text and reject any extensions or .interpretations transmitted through the oral and written tradition

In contrast, Shi'ite religious practice, as strict and legalistic as it may be, which assures a solid orthodoxy and orthopraxy, is accompanied, in the matter of faith, with a profound spirituality of a metaphysical and esoteric character which extends to its interpretation of the Qur'an, the sunnah and the shari'ah. It is for these reasons, for its Gnostic character, that the application of the term "fundamentalist" to Shi'ite Islam is totally unjustified. In every sense, Shi'ite Islam represents Islamic orthodoxy as much as Sunni Islam.[۶۹] Without a doubt, it is the minority status of Shi'ism in the Muslim world, as opposed to ritual, doctrinal or scriptural deviation, that gives Westerners the impression that it is a ".“sect

From ancient times until the present, the notion of "sect" has not been freed from the prejudice that it applies only to small religious groups. As the old Latin proverb goes: Si duo faciunt idem, non est idem [If two do the same thing, it is not the same thing]. Obviously, these ideas about sects are applied by Westerners to whatever phenomenon they can reduce to this label. Evidently, this is done without considering their inner aspects, where major spiritual differences are really hidden. Moreover, we cannot dismiss the ill-concealed aims of certain specialists to place all minority religions into the framework of a single verdict of justification or rejection. They wish to do this by exclusively considering the external manifestations of religion, which constitute the .visible skeleton of orthodoxy, when it is essentially a question of interiority

Finally, if we have spent more time than necessary dealing with term “fundamentalism,” it is because the general use of this term conveys a “sectarian” attitude. Its use is obviously misguided and distorted because it is born out of a fanatic and uncompromising attitude in favor of one party or one idea. It is always convenient to give a sectarian nature to Shi‘ite Islam by means of the “fundamentalist” label, without understanding that the real reason for its existence is clearly traditional. The phenomenon we refer to is a common vice. In fact, it is the main reason why the Western mentality is unable to understand the Eastern spirit. Clearly, it is not a question of cultural differences or contradictions in term but, to paraphrase the words of Suhrawardi,[٧٠] forms of spiritual participation or .perspectives between an Orient of Illumination [ishraq] and an Occident of Exile

There is no point in denying that the most esoteric of these Islamic sciences was related to neo-Pythagoreanism[٧١] and hermeticism.[٧٢] It was through them that Islam came into close contact with the Sabeans of Harran.[٧٣] They were responsible for transmitting astronomy, astrology and mathematics from Babylonian sources and later Chaldeans [bound with the hermetic-Pythagorean ideas of Alexandria to Islam. All of this is true.[٧۴

It is also true that medicine and cosmology reached the Muslims by means of the Hindus and the Persians. These sciences were eagerly embraced by Islam since, far from being secular forms of knowledge, they were intrinsically linked to the central doctrine of “divine unity.” On the other hand, some aspects of classical Greek and Hindu culture, like the secular philosophies of the Epicureans,[٧۵] some of the cynics[٧۶] and the naturalism of the anatomists, barely aroused the interest of the Muslims. It was impossible for knowledge of this type, based on sensuality and a dualistic relativism, to be integrated into Islamic thought in a cohesive and cogent form since they were outside of the nature .of the Gnostic experience

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The Mu‘tazilite’s refutation of certain aspects of dualist and trinitarian theories, however, brought Islam a theological solution in accordance with the concept of divine unity. In their defense of Greco-Alexandrian philosophy, the Mu‘tazilites created favorable conditions for study and scholarship in Shi‘ite intellectual circles. This affinity and sympathy between the Mu‘tazilites and the Shi‘ites must not be confounded in any way as identity.[٧٧] On fundamental issues, such as the significance and function of the Imam, they differ completely. On that issue, the Mu‘tazilite perspective is much closer to that of the Sunni. What is clear is that during the entire history of Islam, the pre-Islamic legacy of cosmological sciences and metaphysical doctrines were united, as they were in the Jabirian corpus or in the Rasa’il [Epistles] of the ikhwan al-safa’ [The Pure Brethren / The Brotherhood of the Pure][٧٨] in a perfect synthesis. Science and scholarship from external .sources never ruptured Islam’s monotheistic mandate

Modern Muslim scholars like Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ayatullahs Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba‘i, Ahmad Ahmadi and Orientalists like Henry Corbin,[٧٩] Titus Burckhardt, René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon[٨٠] teach us to view Islam from a perspective which appreciates the diversity within its unity. The harmonious integration of diverse systems of thought within its unitarian perspective makes it all the more appealing particularly since it is the product of the Muhammadan spirit which is essentially metaphysical and ethical. Thanks to the research of these scholars and the research of those who follow in their footsteps like William C. Chittick, William C." , Christian Jambet and Pierre Lory, to mention only a few, Islam is no longer a mass which crushes us under its enormous religious weight.[٨١] It is also no longer a primitive pastoral religion of shepherds or an [Arab imitation or adaptation of Judaism and Christianity.[٨٢

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On the contrary, Islam is now presented as a type of intelligent filter that magically selects, cleans and purifies, preserving what is of value while filtering out and rejecting what is harmful and useless from profane secular knowledge. Like these scholars, we view the transfer or transmission of the pre-Islamic legacy as a natural unveiling of the universal continuity of the same spiritual inheritance.[۸۳] Due to its metaphysical nature, its development is indefinite. It manifests itself in given historical moments and takes root in the most fertile field to ensure its spiritual blooming. This is how we see things as opposed to embracing theories of "influx" and "imitation." Our perspective is not a .personal one. It is entirely in accord with the eternal sacred tradition

But let us be candid. Even if we were to view Islam as the result of some historical "influx" or as a "copy" or a pre-Islamic religious model--rejecting everything that is authentic and unique in its own revelation--we should recognize as well, as does Cruz Hernández, that [even under such conditions no religion has turned out better than Islam.[۸۴

It was Cruz Hernández, the distinguished professor from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, who presented a staunch criticism of the methodology employed by Asín Palacios. As Cruz Hernández points out, Palacios' attitude is not only the product of his social context and his training as a Catholic priest, it also reflects the state of scientific thought of his time (۴۹۰). Like Cruz Hernández, our goal is not to cast doubt on the value of Asín Palacios work as a whole by criticizing a widely held prejudice against Islam which was .also applied to other religions

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Palacios for his important contributions to the knowledge of Islam during the period of al-Andalus. Although much of his work has merit, it must be stressed, however, that the methodology that he employs, and which is employed by Gibb as well, is completely wrong. Their approach is erroneous for the simple fact that it is based on a principle which is inherently flawed. The problem with their approach is the belief that for religious studies to be scientific, to come to an understanding of religion in general and Islam in particular, it is necessary to narrow things down to a few facts.[۸۵] Once non-essential elements have been reduced to minimal terms, to abstract formulas and to skeletal hypotheses, all traditions can be condensed into an imaginary framework of classifications that conveniently explain certain similarities between the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions through theories of "assimilation" or "successive reproduction."[۸۶]

As can be appreciated, we would exhaust ourselves uselessly attempting to criticize such an understanding of religion. The case has been judged and the verdict has been given. As René Guénon has observed in relation to the Vedanta, Eastern and Western concepts of "religion" are profoundly different.[۸۷] In order to prevent such confusion from extending to Islam, it is important to remember here that tradition, as opposed to religion, is the vital source of all religious forms. A tradition does not have established dogmas or precepts; it has universal meanings which are applied to dogmas and religious precepts. At the end of this cycle and the beginning of the next cycle, it is exceedingly important not to reject tradition.[۸۸]

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So long as we believe that the part is present in the whole there will be religion. Revelation, faith, truth and religion are neither fact nor are they ideas. They are expressions of a sole spiritual beginning.[٨٩] In the Western world, however, specialists have a very different conception of religion. Some will argue that if you know one religion then you know them all. Others hold that if you know one religion you know none of them. And there are still others who hold that a religion outside of your own is incapable of teaching you anything and is not even worthy of consideration.[٩٠] These are the very same specialists who stubbornly insist on portraying Islam as an Arab invention based on Judeo-Christian traditions or a classic case of "assimilation" or "successive reproduction."[٩١] Religious traditions from East and West do indeed share many similarities which are more or less obvious to scholars.[٩٢] Nowadays, most sincere scholars are willing to drop the term "religion" in favor of the more appropriate term ."tradition," a concept that acknowledges God as the eternal source of all revelation

Footnote

Editor's Note: The Mormons are followers the Church of Latter Day Saints founded by [١] Joseph Smith (١٨٣٠) in the state of New York. His authority rested on the revelation to him of The Book of Mormon, an alleged pre-Columbian work giving the history of American peoples of Hebrew origin from the Diaspora to ٨٠٠ A.D. After Smith's death, Brigham Young became leader and transferred the movement to Salt Lake City, Utah (١٨۴٧), where a prosperous community was established. When the practice of polygamy was stopped, Utah was incorporated (١٨٩۶) into the Union as the ۴۵th state. Mormons believe that The Book of Mormon is of equal inspiration with the Bible. The Church of Latter Day Saints is .considered to some to be a cult

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Editor's Note: The Seventh Day Adventists are members of an [۲]

Adventist sect founded in ۱۸۴۴ in the U.S.A. Like the Mormons, they also follow a false prophet. As for the Jehovah's Witnesses, they are a Christian sect founded in ۱۸۷۲ in Pennsylvania by Charles T. Russell. They accept a literal interpretation of the Bible and stress the imminent coming of a terrestrial, theocratic kingdom, into which only the Witnesses will pass. They hold that Ellen G. White (۱۸۲۷-۱۹۱۵) was given the gift of prophecy by the Holy Spirit and was the Lord's messenger, her writings serving as an authoritative source of trust, guidance, instruction and correction. See "Fundamental Beliefs," Seventh Day Adventist Church: http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html. The Ellen G. White Estate, Inc. :Website, explains that

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Mrs. White was more than a gifted writer; they believe she was appointed by God as a special messenger to draw the world's attention to the Holy Scriptures and help prepare people for Christ's Second Advent. From the time she was ۱۷ years old until she died ۷۰ years later, God gave her approximately ۲,۰۰۰ visions and dreams. The visions varied in length from less than a minute to nearly four hours. The knowledge and counsel received through these revelations she wrote out to be shared with others. Thus her special writings are accepted by Seventh-day Adventists as (inspired. (White

Author's Note: For the development of heterodoxies in Christianity, the following [۳] should be considered: A. Orbe, Parábolas evangélicas en San Ireneo-I-II (۴۶۰ and ۵۱۵ .(respectively

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[۴] Editor's Note: Some Orientalists seek to cause confusion, to put up smoke screens and to undermine Islam at the behest of certain states, for purely political reasons. Historically, some Orientalists served the imperial intentions of colonial masters. For more on Orientalist efforts to undermine Islam, see Ahmad Ghorab's Subverting Islam: The Role of Orientalist Centers. The book is also available in Spanish translation by Hector Abu Dharr Manzolillo, under the name Subvertir el Islam: La función de los centros orientalistas.

[۵] Editor's Note: As Nwyia explains,

On sait que les fuqaha', qui lisent le Coran en philologues ou en juristes, rejettent la lecture spiritualiste des soufis comme une nouveauté étrangère et infidèle au texte sacré. Or, parce que leur point de vue légaliste s'est imposé dans l'Islam officiel et est devenu pour ainsi dire le point de vue de l'orthodoxie, les soufis ont pris, aux yeux de l'histoire, figure de secte plus au moins hétérodoxe, leur lecture du Coran a été considérée comme une lecture tardive et étrangère à l'Islam primitif. (۲۳)

[It is well-known that the fuqaha', who interpret the Qur'an as

philologists or jurists, reject the mystical interpretations of the Sufis as a foreign innovation which is unfaithful to the sacred text. Since their legalistic perspective imposed itself in official Islam it became the orthodox position. In the eyes of history, the Sufis were relegated to the status of a more or less heterodox sect and their interpretations of the Qur'an viewed as a later development which was alien to primitive Islam.]

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,As Murata observes

Though the proponents of al-kalam [scholastic philosophy] have often been looked upon by Western scholars as the representatives of 'orthodox' Islam, this is to impose an inappropriate category upon Islamic civilization, as many other scholars have pointed out. In fact, by and large the criteria for being Muslim have been following the shari'ah and acknowledging the truth of a certain basic creed. Beyond that, a variety of positions concering the details of the creed were possible, and none could be said to be 'orthodox' .(to the exclusion of others" (۸

Tariq Ramadan, grandson of Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, confirms that "[a]ll Muslims--Orthodox, Sunni, Sufi, or Shi'ah--are part of the same .(understanding of the shari'ah" (۲۱۱-۲۱۲

[۶] Editor's Note: Muslims, in general, should oppose the labels imposed on them by outsiders. This applies to the terms "heterodox," "heretical," "sect," "fundamentalist" and ."Islamist." The author and the editor, however, must use them in order to disprove them

[۷] Editor's Note: In this sense, Sunnism, Shi'ism and Sufism can all claim to be authentic expressions of Islam. As Sachiko Murata explains, " When we look a the Islamic intellectual history...we see...that there is no question of a universally recognized 'orthodox' school of thought, but rather a large numer of schools that debate among themselves concerning how the basic items of the creed are to be understood" (The Tao .(of Islam ۸

[۸] Editor's Note: As Nasr has put it, "There is no magisterium in Islam" (The Heart of Islam ۸۵). While Vittor and Nasr are correct that there is no official institution which speaks for Islam in matters of orthodoxy, for Shi'ites, there is a magisterium in Islam, the Imamate, the throne of which is mostly empty, in the absence of the chief magistrate, Imam .Muhammad al-Mahdi

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Editor's Note: In simpler and more modern terms, the estoric and the exoteric are two [۹] faces of the same coin. For scholars like Corbin, Shi'ism and Sufism were identical in essence and that Shi'ism was only the outer form of Islamic mysticism. Evidently, this is not the case as Shi'ism represents a balancing totality between both the esoteric and .exoteric dimensions of the din

Author's Note: The following quotations are from Nahj al-balaghah / Peak of [۱۰] Eloquence translated by Seyed 'Ali Reza. It contains an interesting preface, a brief .biography on the compiler and abundant notes

Editor's Note: The work is also available in a Spanish translation titled La cumbre de la elocuencia. An abridged Arabic / French edition

translated by Samih Atef El-Zein also exists but devoid of most of the sermons dealings .with the status of the ahl al-bayt

Editor's Note: Allawi's "Sufyani and Muhammadi Islam" gives an exposition of two [۱۱] distinct interpretations of the Muslim religion. There cannot, however, be two versions of .Islam, a good Islam and a bad Islam

Editor's Note: The Sufi Muslims, for example, embrace music and poetry from other [۱۲] cultures as a means of drawing people into Islam. As Nasr explains, "Sufism has had the greatest role in the spread of Islam, in addition to its vital function in the preservation and purification of ethical life, the creation of the arts, and the exposition of unitive knowledge [ma'rifah] and metaphysics within Islamic society" (Heart of Islam ۶۳-۶۴). Massignon notes that "In India, Islam was spread not by war but by mysticism and the great orders of mystics" (۶۱). Islam is a great syncretic sponge. Its survivability is the result of its .adaptability

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Editor's Note: Strickly speaking, the ahl al-kitab, the People of the Book, are the Jews [١٣] and Christians. Tabataba'i and Lankarani include Zoroastrians in this definition. Mawlana Muhammad 'Ali, the Qadiani scholar, is most liberal to claim that "the Parsis, the Buddhists "Hindus" all fall into this category" (۶١۴). He even believes that "Parsi and Hindu women may be taken in marriage, as also those who follow the religion of Confucius or of Buddah or of Tao" (۶١۵). He criticizes the narrow conception of the word ahl al-kitab adopted by the jurist and holds that "there is no reason why the Magians, the Hindus and others who .(profess a religion and accept a revealed book, should not be treated as such" (۶١۵

Editor's Note: This is an allusion to the Qur'anic verse: "From Allah we come and to [١۴] .(Him is our return" (٢:١۵۶

Editor's Note: Xenophanes (۶th c. B.C.) was a Greek philosopher and poet known for [١۵] his monotheism. He is not to be confused with Xenophon (c. ۴٣٠-c. ٣۵۵)--the Greek general and writer--the disciple of Socrates. Xenophanes, who particularly objected to the anthropomorphism of Homer and Hesido in their portrayal of the gods, gave the following definition of the Divine: "God is one, greatest among gods and men, in no way like mortals either in body or in mind" (qtd. Netton ١). Parmenides (c. ۵٠۴-۴۵٠ B.C.) was a Greek Eleatic philosopher. He regarded movement and change as illusions, and the universe as single, continuous and motionless. Plato (c. ۴٢٨-c. ٣۴٨ B.C.) was a Greek philosopher who was a follower of Socrates. Aristotle (٣٨۴-٣٢٢ B.C.) was a Greek philosopher, pupil of Plato, tutor of Alexander the Great, and founder of the Peripatetic School at Athens (٣٣۵ B.C.). His philosophy grew away from the idealism of Plato and became increasingly concerned with science and the phenomena of the world. His analyses were original and profound and his methods exercised an enormous influence on all subsequent thought. Plotinus (٢٠۵-٧٠) was a Roman philosopher of Egyptian birth. After studying in Alexandria, he established his Neoplatonic School in Rome (٢۴۴). He used the metaphysical truths of Plato [esp. the dialectic of love] to create a mystic religion of union with the One through contemplation and ecstatic vision. Through Saint Augustine his theory of the human spirit .entered into the mainstream of Western philosophy

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Author's Note: For a comparison of the doctrines of Plotinus and Sankara, see García [۱۶] Bazán, in Baine Harris (ed.), Neoplatonism and Indian Thought (۱۸۱-۲۰۷); Neoplatonismo y Vedanta; La doctrina de la materia en Plotino y Sankara and for a paragon between Plotinus and Isam see Nabi, "Union with God in Plotinus and Bayazid" in Harris (۲۲۷-۲۳۲). Most importantly, one should consult the volume prepared by P. Morewedge, .Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought

Editor's Note: Sankara was a commentator on the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita, writing in c. ۸۰۰ A.D. He was an upholder of traditional monistic Hinduism, which reduces .all reality to a single principle or substance

Editor's Note: Idris is the Arabic name for the Hebrew Hanokh and the English Enoch, [۱۷] the Biblical prophet who supposedly lived from ۳۲۸۴ to ۳۰۱۷ B. C. In the Holy Qur'an, Almighty Allah says that: "He was a man of truth and a prophet. We raised him to a lofty station" (۱۹:۵۶-۵۷) and refers to him as a man of "constancy and patience" whom Allah admitted to His Mercy as a righteous one (۲۱: ۸۵-۸۶). More than a man, Idris is an archetype, a sublime soul appearing in various cultures as Thoth, Hermes and Metraton, .among others

Editor's Note: The first sentence of the shahadah is typically translated as "There is no [۱۸] god but Allah" but it can also be translated as "There is no god; only Allah." The attributes of Allah can also be used in the shahadah as in "There is no Reality but the Reality" which .leads to the metaphysical notion that nothing exists outside of Allah

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Editor's Note: The words "faith" and "belief" cannot convey the sense of the Arabic [۱۹] ".iman which means "absolute knowledge, belief and conviction

Editor's Note: As Shaykh Sadduq explains, "There can be no forgiveness for sceptics [۲۰] [ahl al-shakk] and polytheists [ahl al-shirk]; nor for unbelievers [ahl al-kufr] and those who are persistent in their denial [ahl al-juhud]. But the sinful among those who believe in the unity of

.(Allah [ahl al-tawhid] may be forgiven" (۱۲۲

Editor's Note: For the Qur'anic quotes in this translation, we have relied mostly on the [۲۱] English translation of 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali. We have also consulted Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall and M.H. Shakir; the French translations of Muhammad Hamidullah and Denise Masson and the Spanish translations of Julio Cortés and Juan Vernet. The Yusuf 'Ali translation is closer to conveying the style as opposed to the literal sense of the Qur'an which Pickthall adheres too more closely. The original Yusuf 'Ali commentary was a fine work of scholarship. Over successive editions, however, the text and tafsir [commentary] have been "purged" of any and all ideas which are not in line with Wahhabi ideology. The value of Shakir's translation resides primarily in that it is expressed in clear modern English. The Hamidullah translation, the product of two years of labor, adequately conveys the meaning of the scripture and is accompanied with a basic commentary. The Masson, translation, however, the result of three decades of effort, is far superior stylistically. However, the modified Hamidullah version prepared in Saudi Arabia is the most perfect. While the Vernet translation manifest a filo-Christianizing tendency which often substantially modifies the sense of certain figures of diction and classical Arabic formulas its literary value far exceeds the crude and vulgar translation made by Cortés. While the Vernet translation is more manicured, both the Vernet and Cortés translations manifest distortions and corruptions of the Qur'an. Vernet's introduction and notes are devoted to casting doubt on the authenticity of the text on the basis of sloppy scholarship which is easily dismissed by Ayatullah Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdi's comprehensive criticism of tahrif [textual change], "Originality and the Genuineness of the Holy Qur'an in its Text and Arrangement" which accompanies Ahmed 'Ali's translation of the Qur'an which itself is very poor and which can only be partially redeemed by its philosophical commentary. See also, Tahrif al-Qur'an: A Study of

.Misconceptions Regarding Corruption of the Qur'anic Text" by Muhammad Baqir Ansari

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:Editor's Note: As Almighty Allah explains [٢٢]

Those who believe [in the Qur'an], and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall (they grieve. (٢:۶٢, see also ٢٢:١٧ and ۵:۶٩

This could also be applied to Vedic Hinduism. In the Vedas we read that God has many names but the wise call Him One. In the ٢٠th century, the Arya Samaj reformist movement was formed within Hinduism. It calls for a rejection of all polytheism and idolatrous worship in favor of the Vedas alone. This acceptance of previous religions applies to pre-Islamic times and to those who, since the advent of Islam, were not reached by its message. According to the Qur'an and Sunnah it is incumbent on all .believers to accept Muhammad as the final Messenger of Allah

Editor's Note: Tawhid is also the union of the divine order and the worldly order, [٢٣] .between religion and state

Editor's Note: As Gibb explains: al-Shadhili (d. ١٢۵٨) studied in Fez under a disciple of [٢۴] Abu Madyan. Eventually settling in Alexandria, a circle of pupils gathered around him. He had no monastery and no set form of rituals. He discouraged his followers from giving up their trades and professions for the contemplative life. But little more than a generation later, his disciples adopted the normal organization of a tariqah, which spread over North Africa and into Arabic. The town of Mokha in the Yemen in particular adopted al-Shadili as its patron saint and venerates him as the originator of coffee-drinking. The Shadiliyyah order is in general more extravagant in ritual and more ecstatic than the Qadiriyyah, but is remarkable especially for the large number of sub-orders to which it gave rise, both directly and in conjunction with the Qadiriyyah. Among the best known are the 'Isawiyyah, with its famous sword-lashing ritual, and at the other extreme the orthodox .(and austere Derqawa of Morocco and Western Algeria (١٠٨

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Editor's Note: Which is exactly what the Messenger of Allah stated himself when [۲۵] asked what one needed to do to go to Paradise: "Offer your five obligatory prayers, observe fast during the whole of the month of Ramadan, pay the poor due (zakat) out of your wealth and obey whatever He commands you, then you will enter the Paradise of your Lord" (Ahmad). The Qur'an and the Sunnah are explicit in establishing

Muhammad as the final prophet and messenger. Almighty Allah says that: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets [khatim al-nabiyyin]: and Allah has full knowledge of all things. (۲۳۳:۴۰). The Messenger of Allah said on numerous occasions that "[T]here will be no prophet after me" (Bukhari, Muslim, Hakim, Sadduq, Mufid, Kulayni, Majlisi). Consequently, the sects and cults who believe in a prophet after Muhammad cannot be considered Muslims. These include the Ahmadiyyah / Qadianis, the Nation of Islam and its offshoots (the Five Percenters, the Ansars, and so forth). The followers of Elijah Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan, Louis" are outside of the fold of Islam for, as the "Muslim Program" explains on their web site and their publications, they "believe that Allah (God) appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad, July, ۱۹۳۰; the long-awaited "Messiah" of the Christians and the "Mahdi" of the Muslims." The NOI believes that Master W. Fard Muhammad was Allah and that Elijah Muhammad was his Final Messenger. This is whom they refer to when they say "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger." The belief in hulul [incarnation] is the antithesis of tawhid [oneness of God] and the belief in a prophet after Muhammad is clearly inconsistent with the Qur'an and Sunnah. The NOI believes racial separation and that "intermarriage or race mixing should be prohibited" while Islam has abolished racism (۴۹:۱۳: ۴:۱; ۲:۲۱۳; ۶:۹۸; ۷:۱۸۹; ۲۱:۹۲; ۲۳:۵۲). As the Prophet said in his Farewell Sermon, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over a white - except by piety and good action" (Muslim, Ahmad, Darimi, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud, Ibn Hibban et al.). The NOI believes "in the resurrection of the dead--not in physical resurrection--but in mental resurrection" while Islam believes in physical resurrection. The NOI believes that black people "are the people of God's choice" while Islam does not believe in Chosen People. In short, the Nation of Islam has little in common with Islam besides its name. Claude Andrew Clegg is thus in error when he claims that "[i]n regards to traditional or

orthodox Islam, the Nation of Islam was heterodox in many of its views and practices; however, it was arguably a legitimate Muslim sect given its marginal adherence to central tenets of the Islamic faith." (۶۸). He adds that "[o]verall, the basic outlines of

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both religious traditions do appear to overlap enough to allow the black organization to reasonably claim membership in the body of Islam, albeit as a heretical limb" (۶۹). The Nation of Islam cannot be heterodox, a legitimate Muslim sect, a member in the body of .Islam and a heretical limb at the same time

Editor's Note: The term arkan al-din is not used by Shi'ah scholars, but there is [۲۶] mention of da'a'im al-Islam in Shi'ah tradition with five items with an interesting modification: salat, sawm, zakat, hajj and, nota bene, wilayah. For example, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir said: "Islam is based on five [pillars]: on salat, sawm, zakat, hajj and wilayah --and nothing has been promoted more than the promoting of wilayah" (Kulayni). In another hadith, the same Imam has been quoted in the same way with the addition of the following sentence at the end "...but the people took the four and abandoned this one ".[[ie. wilayah

Editor's Note: Shi'ite scholars prefer to list belief, usul al-din [the pillars or religion] and [۲۷] .practice, furu' al-din, [the branches of religion] separately

Editor's Note: The term qiyamah [Resurrection] is used synonymously to express this [۲۸] .pillar

Editor's Note: Hence, whereas the Shi'ite might seek the intercession of the Imams, [۲۹] the Sufis seek the intercession of their awliyya' or saints. For more on intercession in Islam, see 'Abd al-Karim Bi-Azar Shirazi's "Tawassut." The Salafis do not believe in .tawassut

Editor's Note: Most Sunnites, however, follow the Ash'arite school of theology [۳۰] established by Abu al-Hasan 'Ali al- Ash'ari (c. ۸۷۴-۹۳۵), a famous Arab theologian from Iraq. Ash'ari insists that, since God is All-Powerful, he can do as He pleases, placing a good person in hell and a bad person in Heaven. The Ash'arites give precendence to God's All-Powerful attribute as opposed to the intregral attribute of justice which is stressed by Shi'ite theologians. They also hold that the Qur'an is the uncreated word of God, an idea rejected by Shi'ites as only Allah is eternal. For more on the differences in the approach to the concept of Divine Justice among the theologians and philosophers of Shi'ah Islam, see the introduction to Shahid Mutahhari's al-'adl al-ilahi which has recently .been published in English as Divine Justice

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Author's Note: For the distinction between "tradition" and "religion," see Guénon, [۳۱] Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues (۴) and García Bazán, "La tradición y la unidad transcendente de las religiones" in Atma Jnana (۵-۸). See, as well: Schuon, .L'unité transcendente des religions

Editor's Note: Islam recognizes all revealed religions. In the Islamic view, Judaism and Christianity are steps on the spiritual road to salvation: its followers are People of the Book. The religions revealed by God are different crystallizations of the divine message. It should be noted, however, that the author is not advocating religious relativism or pluralism. His thoughts are more in line with the perennial philosophy of René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon which holds that all religions teach the same thing, but in different ways. However, in order to see this universal core, one must turn from the exoteric to the esoteric aspects of the religions. As regards the divinely sanctioned nature of religions outside of Islam, Muslims scholars are divided. Western-trained Orientalists like Nasr and Sachedina believe that all Abrahamic religions remain valid, based on the following :Qur'anic verses

Those who believe [in the Qur'an], and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall (they grieve. (۲:۶۲; ۵:۶۹

According to Nasr "al-islam refers to that universal surrender to the One and that primordial religion contained in the heart of all heavenly inspired religions, not just to Islam in its more particular sense" (The Heart of Islam ۱۷). Ibn al-'Arabi, the great spiritual :master, observes that

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Religion is of two kinds, the religion of God and those whom God has taught His religion and those whom they have taught and, second, the religion of created beings, which God acknowledges. The religion of God is that chosen by Him and set by Him at a level far (above the religion of creation. (Bezels ١١٣

According to the Shaykh al-Akbar, the Qur'anic verse "The religion

with Allah is Islam" (٢:١٣٢) means following, obeying, yielding and submitting to God, regardless of one's religion. In the eyes of Ibn al-'Arabi, there is truth even in pagan deities since "in every object of worship there is a reflection of the Reality" (Bezels ٧٨). Ayatullah al-Uzma Shaykh Yusuf Sana'i goes even further arguing that: I am of the opinion that paradise is the result of doing good deeds and avoiding evil deeds according to the best of one's understanding. Regardless of the religion people practice, and so long as they are convinced without a doubt of the righteousness of their belief, they will get what they deserve. God says: "Good deeds will be rewarded ten times as much as they deserve, and evildoers will be given punishment which fits the evil; You shall not be unfairly treated." According to Molla-Sadra, paradise inevitably evolves from spiritual development. In some Qur'anic verses, faith is a vital prerequisite for paradise. According to my interpretation, faith is a sincere belief in the goodness of one's deeds, not belief in God. Strong belief is associated with the mental serenity, and it contributes to spiritual development. However, someone with a sense of being under compulsion can never be consistent in doing good deeds and improve. Neither identification nor label, be it Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist, is the requirement for paradise, but indeed good deeds are. An agnostic involved in his skepticism cannot believe in God or prophet. Neither do Christians put trust in Prophet Muhammad. It would be utterly inconceivable if God called for a particular identification on the Doomsday. Would it be unfair? The Qur'an says reassuringly: "God shall not be unfair to any of his creatures." Similarly, evil doing mortifies the human soul, which leads to hell. It makes no difference which religion or belief you follow but the deeds you perform. If doubt is cast upon the authenticity of one's religion, one must seek the truth; other wise one if guilty of laxity. (http://www.saanei.org/page.php?pg=showmeetingid=٢٢lang=en) With all due respect, Ayatullah Sana'i's interpretation of the Qur'anic iman as faith in one's deeds and not faith in God is clearly untenable as it is duly defined by Almighty Allah as belief amana bi Allahi wa al-yawmi al-akhiri wa al-malaikati wa al-kitabi wa al-nabiyyina, namely, belief in Allah,

and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Messengers" (٢:١٧٧). Ayatullah Sana'i further holds, "all non-Muslims, including Hindus, fire-worshippers, and cow-worshippers, are pure,"

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only atheists are unbelievers. He holds that spiritual impurity is the result of ascribing partners to God while one knows that He is One. He claims that "ascribing partners to God through neglect does not make one an unbeliever, merely unenlightened." However, if Muhammad had adopted this pluralistic position, the prophetic mission would surely have failed. According to most traditional scholars, particularly Muslim jurists, Islam has fulfilled all previous monotheistic religions, superceeded them, abrogated them and replaced them. In their view, Islam has precedence over its predecessors. As Legenhausen explains: Islam not only shatters previous forms in the name of the spirit, however, it also imposes its own form in place of those it has shattered. It is that form, or exterior, which constitutes the gateway to its spirit, or interior, which, by virtue of its content and the position of Islam in the line of succession of revealed religions, is more comprehensive than any other. Furthermore, Islam does not violate the truths of the previously revealed religions; rather it confirms them. What Islam shatters is what is false in the other religions because of corruption and deviation or because of the temporal limitations of their validity. Sachedina was sanctioned by Ayatullah al-'Uzma Sistani for his belief that salvation can be obtained through any major monotheistic religion so long as one submits to God (Sachedina "What Happened"). His position find support in Imam al-Riza hadith which states that: "Whoever denies the Prophet of Allah is like one who has denied all the prophets of Allah." Sachedina's belief that all Abrahamic religions are valid and equal in truth was dismissed by Ayatullah Sistani as "nonsense" ("What Happened"). According to Sachedina, the word islam, as it appears in the Qur'an, merely means an act of submission and is not the name of a religion ("What Happened"). According to Ayatullah Sistani this is not the case. In his view, Sachedina's interpretation is based on a failure to understand the basic rules of Arabic grammar regarding definite and indefinite nouns ("What Happened"). The word islam is accompanied by the article al- [the] which makes it a proper noun. As such, the Qur'an is speaking about Islam as a religion and not "submission" as a vague generalized concept. Scholars like Sistani cite the following verses of the Qur'an to argue that, since the coming of Muhammad, the Final Messenger, there can be no

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salvation outside of the religion of Islam: The Religion before Allah is Islam. (۳:۱۹) O ye who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not without being Muslims. (۳:۱۰۲) Those whom Allah willeth to guide, He openeth their breast to Islam; those whom He willeth to leave straying. (۶:۱۲۵) This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion: yet fear them not but fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. But if any is forced by hunger, with no inclination to transgression, Allah is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (۵:۳) If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost [all spiritual good]. (۳: ۸۵) Those who die rejecting faith, and die rejecting, on them is Allah's curse, and the curse of angels, and of all mankind. (۲:۱۶۱) The followers of past monotheistic religions, prior to the advent of Islam, have nothing to fear: Those who believe [in the Qur'an], and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (۲:۶۲; ۵:۶۹) According to most traditional scholars of Islam, the Qur'anic verses which reassure that the People of the Book will have their reward (۲:۶۲; ۵:۶۹) apply to monotheists of all times who were not reached by the prophetic message but who would have embraced it had they heard about it. From the time of Muhammad, they argue, there is only one path, one right religion, for as Almighty Allah says: "But set thou thy face to the right Religion before there come from Allah the Day which there is no chance of averting" (۳۰:۴۳). And as the Messenger of Allah warned, "Any Jew or Christian who heard about me and did not believe in me and what was revealed to me in the Holy Qur'an and my traditions, his ultimate destinate is the [Hell] Fire" (Bukhari). As for Sachedina, Ayatullah al-'Uzma Sistani :has expressed the following

I have looked at the prensentation of the writings and statements of Dr. ‘Abdul ‘Aziz Sachedina that was sent [to me]. Whereas his views on the issues presented are based on incorrect understandings, and are incompatible with religious and academic standards, and cause confusion in minds of the mu’minin [believers] all the brothers and sisters in iman [faith] (may Allah help them in [gaining] His pleasure) are enjoined to refrain from inviting him for lecturing at religious gatherings, and not to approach him for seeking answers to questions pertaining to beliefs. [۲۱ August ۱۹۹۸] (Sistani “Translation of the (“Letter

Editor’s Note: The author is alluding to the Prophet’s saying that “The number of paths [۳۲] .(to God is equal to the number of human souls” (qtd. Tabataba‘i A Shi‘ite Anthology

Editor’s Note: The differences in Islamic schools of thought are a mercy upon the [۳۳] Muslims. As the Prophet said: “Difference of opinion among the ummah is a blessing from Allah” (Bayhaqi, Maqdisi, Daylami). It is clear from the Holy Qur’an that Almighty Allah :appreciates differences and diversity

O mankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other [not that ye may despise each other]. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is [he who is] the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted [with all things]. ((۴۹:۱۳

Editor’s Note: The author is alluding to the Qur’anic teaching concerning the middle [۳۴] path (۱۷:۱۱۰; ۳۵:۳۲). As Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur’an, “We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you (۲:۱۴۳). As Imam Khumayni explains, “The faqih imagines that there is nothing but fiqh; the mystic, that there is nothing but mysticism; the philosopher, that there is nothing but philosophy; and the engineer, that there is nothing but engineering... Knowledge, once seen in this way, becomes the thickest of all veils” (Islam and Revolution ۳۹۵). To be a complete Muslim requires a balance between the inward and .the outward

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Editor’s Note: As Nasr explains, “the Imams of Shi‘ism are seen in the Sufi perspective [۳۵] as the spiritual poles of their age. They appear in the spiritual chain [silsilah] of various Sufi orders, even those which have spread almost exclusively among Sunnis” (Tabataba’i A Shi‘ite Anthology ۷). The Shi‘ite origins of Sufism are well-documented by Nasr in his “Shi‘ism and Sufism: their Relationship in Essence and in History” found in his Sufi Essays. As Nasr explains, “from the Shi‘ite point of view Shi‘ism is the origin of what later came to be known as Sufism” (۱۰۶). According to Moosa, “since the early period of Islam, the Shi‘ites...were strict Zahids [ascetics], who were the forerunners of later Sufis (xxii). Awani confirms that “There is a close relationship between Shi‘ism and Sufism... From an esoteric Shi‘ite point of view, Shi‘ism is the origin of what came to be known as Sufism. Shi‘ite Imams play a very basic and fundamental role in Sufism, but not as Shi‘ite Imams, rather as representatives, par excellence, of Islamic esoterism...almost all Sufi orders [salasil] trace their spiritual pedigree to the Holy Prophet through Imam ‘Ali” (۱۷۲-۷۳). As he explains, “Both Shi‘ism and Sufism can be described as the Islam of Ali ibn Abi Talib. Both emphasize the principle of wilayah [friendship of God or proximity to Him] which in both is traced to the Shi‘ite Imams and Fatimah. Both

believe that the cycle of sanctity [da’irat al-wilayah] starts immediately after the termination of the cycle of prophecy [da’irat al-nubuwwah] (۱۷۳). As Nasr explains, the cycle of initiation guarantees the ever-living presence of an esoteric way in Islam (Sufi Essays ۱۰۸).

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[٣۶] Editor's Note: This hadith can be found in Hakim, Ibn Kathir, Tabarani, Suyuti, Kulayni and Mufid. A variant version is also found in Tirmidhi, Ibn Jarir and Suyuti.

[٣٧] Author's Note: For the symbolism of the "gate" see Guénon, Símbolos fundamentales de la ciencia sagrada, especially chapters ٢۵ and ۴١.

[٣٨] Editor's Note: The Ayatullahs, it should be noted, are jurists and not theologians. The titles Mawlana, Hujjat al-Islam and Ayatullah, among many others, are honorary titles given by the people and have no

theological or jurisprudential implications. In the Shi'ite system of scholarship, the main academic titles are 'alim or scholar, an individual who has completed approximately ١٠ years of study in the hawzah or Islamic seminary; mujtahid, a Muslim lawyer or attorney, an individual who has reached the level of jurist, after an average of ٢٠ years of study; and Marja' al-Taqlid, popularly known as Ayatullah al-'Uzma or Grand Ayatullah, a title acquired after ٣٠ to ۵٠ years of study by individuals who have devoted their entire lives to the Islamic sciences and who are acknowledged by their peers as the foremost jurists and de facto heads of the hawzah.

At present, the top Shi'ite Sources of Emulation include Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Sayyid 'Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Shaykh Fazel Lankarani, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Sayyid Musa Shubayr Zanjani, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Behjat Fumani, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Shaykh Lutfullah Saafi Gulpaygani, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Shaykh Mirza Jawadi Tabrizi, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Shaykh Nuri Hamadani, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Shaykh Husayn Wahid Khurasani, Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid 'Abd al-Karim Musawi Ardebili, Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Shahroudi, and, according to some, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Shaykh Yusuf Sana'i. Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Sayyid 'Ali Khamene'i has muqallidin [followers] from mostly outside of Iran. Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah, whose ijtihad [authority to interpret Islamic law] is called into question by the Sources of Emulation in Iraq and Iran, is also very popular among young people due to the more pragmatic and lenient nature of his edicts; his greater accessibility to the laity, and his acquaintance with Western culture (Takim). For links to all the leading scholars of Shi'ism, the Marji'iyyah al-diniyyah (Religious Authority), see: Aalulbayt Global

.Information Center: http://www.al-shia.com/html/eng/p.php?p= Miscellaneous url= Ulama

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Author's Note: See Ayatullah 'Ali Mishkini, "Wilayat al-Faqih: its meaning and scope" in [٣٩] al-Tawhid: A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Thought and Culture (Tehran ١۴٠۶/١٩٨۵): III, ١, ٢٩-.۶۵

Editor's Note: The concept of the "Authority of the Jurisconsult" was

developed by Imam Khumayni who brought Shi'ite political thought in line with the Sunni perspective which views the head of the Islamic state, the Caliph or Imam, as political successor of the Prophet. Traditionally, Shi'ite scholars have considered all governments .to be illegitimate in the absence of the Twelfth Imam

Editor's Note: The differences between Shi'ite jurists are mainly ones of degree, [۴٠] expressing different dimensions of the same issue. For example, one jurist may hold that a certain act is forbidden [haram], another one may consider it a precautionary prohibition [haram ihtiyyat wajib] and yet another may hold that it is merely reprehensible .[[makruh

Editor's Note: The complete name of this branch of Islam, which represents ١٠ ٪ of [۴١] Muslims worldwide, which is the majority in Iran and Iraq and is strongly represented in Lebanon, Afghanistan and Pakistan, is shi'ah imamiyyah ithna 'ashariyyah or Twelve Imam Shi'ism. Its school of jurisprudence, the Ja'fari madhab, is named in honor of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq who, along with his father, Muhammad al-Baqir, were the founding fathers of fiqh. The Ja'fari madhhab is also known as the fifth school of thought in Islam, along with the four Sunni schools. The orthodox nature of the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence was admitted by Shaykh Salim Shaltut, the head of al-Azhar University, in the following historic ruling in ١٩۵٩ in which he recognized the Ithna 'Ashari school as an acceptable school of jurisprudence in Islam which Muslims were free to follow like any :other school of jurisprudence among the Sunnis

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Islam does not command any of its followers to follow a particular Islamic madhhab. (۱) On the contrary, it establishes for every Muslim the right to follow, at the beginning, any one of the correctly conveyed madhahib, whose verdicts are recorded in their respective books. It is permissible also for any one that

follows one of these schools to change to another one--any other school--and he is not .sinning by doing that

The Ja'fari school which is known as "the madhhab of the Ithna-'Ashari, Imami Shi'i" is (۲) a sound madhhab. It is permissible to worship God according to its teaching, like the rest .of the Sunni madhhabs

The Muslims ought to know this and get rid of their undue bigotry for particular (۳) madhahib. The religion of Allah and His law do not follow, nor are they bound to, a particular madhhab. All [the founders of these madhahib] are mujtahids [jurists], reward-deserving from Allah, and acceptable to Him. It is permissible to the "non-mujtahid" to follow them and to accord with their teaching, whether in devotions or transactions. (("Epilogue" Chirri

[۴۲] Editor's Note: See note ۲۹ and Ahmad Ahmadi, "'Irfan and Tasawwuf (Sufism)" in al-Tawhid (Tehran ۱۴۰۴/۱۹۸۴), I ۴: ۶۳-۷۶.

[۴۳] Author's Note: See, Ibn Khaldun, Muqaddimah (Cairo ۱۹۵۷) ۳۲۱; as well as the English version by F. Rosenthal, Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History (New York: ۱۹۵۸): ۳ vols.

Editor's Note: 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (۱۳۳۲-۱۴۰۶) was an Arab historian most famous for his Muqaddimah in which he develops a scientific philosophy of history. While he recognized the Shi'ite influence on Sufism (Awani ۱۷۲-۷۳), he held some distorted views about Shi'ism and rejected the belief in Imam Mahdi (al-Kafi, ۲:۴, ۴۷۹, note ۲).

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Editor's Note: Nasr defines "fundamentalism" as a reaction to the onslaught of [۴۴] modernism and secularism (The Heart of Islam ۴۰). These fundamentalist groups include Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Abu Sayyaf, al-Qa'idah and their likes. It is worth recalling that terrorism is strictly prohibited in Islam and the events of September ۱۱th were condemned by Muslim scholars, both Sunni and Shi'i. Ayatullah al-:Uzma Yusuf Sana'i has said

In [the] Shi'ite religion terror is definitely condemned. Therefore you are not able to find a Shi'ite Muslim in Taliban movement. We are Shi'ite Muslims, and my interpretation as well as that of other religious leaders in Islam, is that Islam does not accept terror. Terror in Islam, and especially Shi'ite [Islam], is forbidden. (MacIntyre) For rulings against terrorism, see Harun Yayha's Islam Condemns Terrorism http://www.geocities.com/islamicissues/terrorism.html which has been translated into Spanish by Abu Dharr Manzolillo; "Muslims against Terrorism," Internet: http://www.islamfortoday.com/ terrorism.htm; "Muslims Condemn Terrorist Attack; http://www.muhajabah.com/ otherscondemn.php, as well as the following links: http://groups.colgate.edu/ aarislam/response.htm and http://www.cair-.net.org/html/۹۱۱statements.html

Editor's Note: Shi'ite scholars are unanimous in their insistence that, in matters of fiqh, [۴۵] one can only commence the taqlid of a living mujtahid. For Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid ,Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah

it is a question of precaution (http://www.bayynat.org/ www/english/Fatawa/ijtihad.htm). For all others, it is an obligation. See A Concise Commandments of Islam by Khumayni with footnotes from Shariatmadari, Najafi-Marashi, Gulpaygani, Khunsari, Shirazi, Khu'i ۳; Khumayni's The Practical Laws of Islam ۱۸; Khu'i ۱۸; Gulpaygani ۲۲; Lankarani http://www.lankarani.com/English/onlinepub/tawdhih-al-masael/ taqleed.htm; Sistani http://www.sistani.org/html/eng/main/index.php?page=۳lang= engpart=۱. This prevents scholarly stagnation and allowing for gradual evolution of interpretation. The Shi'ite .shari'ah is not static nor is it stagnant

Editor’s Note: Both the quietist and activist approaches are sanctioned by Shi‘ism and [۴۶] find ample justification from the lives of the Prophet and the Imams. In the early days of Islam, the Most Noble Messenger was obliged to adopt a quietist approach. After the establishment of an Islamic State, his policy became an activist one. While his Caliphate was usurped, Imam ‘Ali adopted a policy of strategic compromise. When he assumed power, he adopted an activist line. Imam Hasan moved from activism to quietism while Imam Husayn took activism to its glorious pinnacle of martyrdom. All of the Imams after Husayn adhered to the quietist line. Since the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam, Shi‘ite scholars have followed the quietist approach, which predominates in the hawzah in Najaf or the activist approach, which finds its bastion in the seminary in Qum. For more on the quietist and activist approaches, see my “Strategic Compromise in Islam” For more on .activist scholars refer to Ten Decades of ‘Ulama’s Struggle by Aqiqi Bakhshayeshi

Editor’s Note: The Shi‘ite condemnation of bid‘ah is as strong as the Sunnite one. The [۴۷] Messenger of Allah is quoted as saying “When innovation appears among my people [the Muslims], it is the obligation of scholars to declare his knowledge. May Allah curse the scholars who do not declare [the truth]” (al-Kafi ١:٢ ١۴١: hadith ١۶٠). The Messenger of Allah is also reported to have said that “For each and every innovation [in Islam] which deceives the very faith, there will be after

my death, a sentinel and guide Imam from my progeny, being in charge of the belief to challenge it, to defend it. He will speak under inspiration from Allah, will declare and enlighten the truth, will negate the wiles of the cunning and will speak on behalf of the meek." (۱۴۳: hadith ۱۶۳). The Messenger of Allah has also said that "Every innovation [in religion] is misguidance. And every misguidance leads to hell" (۱۴۶: hadith ۱۶۶). Imam 'Ali has said that "No innovation is introduced unless one sunnah is forsaken, keep away from the innovations and stick to the broad road. Surely the old tested ways are the best and .(the innovated ones are bad" (Nahj al-balaghah ۳۰۲

Editor's Note: Shi'ism belongs to a true living hermeneutic tradition. As Imam [۴۸] Khumayni explains, "The Qur'an has seven or seventy levels of meaning, and the lowest of those levels is the one where it addresses us" (Islam and Revolution ۳۹۱). He was referring to the tradition of the Prophet which states that "The Qur'an has been revealed on seven levels (ahruf), each having an outer and inner meaning, and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib has knowledge of both" (۴۳۰). A similar tradition is related in Sunni sources on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud (Khatib al-Tibrizi, Book ۳, Chap. ۳۷ No. ۶۰۵). It is also related that the Prophet said that: "The Qur'an has a beautiful exterior and a profound interior" (Tabataba'i, The .(Outward

Editor's Note: The author alludes to Mustafa Kamel Atatürk (۱۸۸۱-۱۹۳۸), the Turkish [۴۹] soldier and statesman who was the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey. He contributed to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and abolished the Caliphate in ۱۹۲۴. As a result, Islam ceased to be a political force in the world. He closed theological schools and replaced the Shari'ah with a law code based on the Swiss legal code, the German penal code and the Italian commerce code. He outlawed traditional Islamic headdress for men and insisted that all Turks wear European style hats. He banned the hijab and encouraged women to wear western dress and enter the work force. In ۱۹۲۸, in an effort to distance the people from the Qur'an, the government decreed that the Arabic script was to be replaced by a modified Latin alphabet. All citizens from six to ۴۰ years of age were obliged to attend school to learn the new alphabet. The Turkish language was "purified" by the removal of Arabic and Persian words and replaced by new Turkish ones. Mustafa Kamel opened art schools so that boys and girls could engage in the visual representation of human forms which has been banned during Ottoman times. Atatürk, who was most fond of the national liquor, raki, and consumed vast quantities of it,

legalized alcohol which is strictly forbidden in Islam. In ۱۹۳۴, he required all Turks to adopt western style surnames. Ironically, after waging war against the Turkish culture and religion, he adopted the name Kemal Atatürk meaning "father of the Turks." He died in ۱۹۳۸ of cirrhosis of the liver, the result of years of excessive drinking. He left Turkey with a divided identity, trapped between East and West, Europeanized but not quite European, .alienated from the Islamic world but still a Muslim country

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Editor's Note: Ibn Taymiyyah (۶۶۱- ۷۲۸) was a scholar of the Hanbali school of thought. [۵۰] He held that Allah's "hand," "foot," "shin" and "face" were literal [haqiqi] attributes and that Allah is upon the throne in person. Sunni authorities like Taqi al-Din Subki, Ibn Hajar Haythami and al-Izz ibn Jama'a passed rulings against following him in matters of 'aqidah [religious beliefs] as his views fell outside of the consensus of Sunni scholars. Ibn Taymiyyah is considered one of the ideological forefathers of Wahhabism and Salafism. ".For more on his views see Allawi's "Sufyani or Muhammadi Islam

Editor's Note: Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (۱۷۰۳-۹۲) founded the puritanical [۵۱] Wahhabi sect of Islam in Nejd c. ۱۷۴۴. The Wahhabis conquered Arabia (۱۸۰۳), were beaten by the Ottoman Turks (۱۸۱۹) and acquired political power under King ibn Saud (early ۲۰th c.). They destroyed the tombs of the Prophet's Family and Companions in the Cemetery of al-Baqi in Madinah. They were poised to raze the Prophet's tomb but were forced to retreat due to Egyptian threats of war. Extremist Wahhabis hold that all Muslims, with the exception of themselves, are heretics and infidels whose blood is halal. This has resulted in the rape and slaughter of Sunni, Shi'ite and Sufi Muslims throughout .the Islamic world, most particularly in Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and India

Editor's Note: It is for this reason that Shi'ite Islam is described as Islam-Original and [۵۲] .the Imams are viewed as the Pillars of Islam

Author's Note: The word kisa' means "mantle" or "cloak." In Shi'ite Gnosticism, the [۵۳] practice of wearing and passing on the mantle is associated with the passing of spiritual and temporal authority of the Muhammadan wilayah. Among the Sufis from the Sunni world, the practice of wearing and passing on the mantle is intimately associated with the transmission of the "sanctifying grace" of "blessed influx" [barakah] of the wilayah [holinesss] which, in its origins, is related to Shi'ite esoterics and the Gnostic doctrines of the Imams. This hadith appears in different form in Shi'ite sources like Ghayat al-maram (Tehran ۱۲۷۲, ۲۸۷). The recognition of the spiritual supremacy of ahl al-bayt (The Prophetic Household), namely, Fatimah, 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn by Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet, who did not include herself among them, appear in many Sunni sources like, Sahih Tirmidhi (vol. ۵, ۳۱ (H. ۳۲۵۸), ۳۲۸, (H. ۳۲۷۵); ۳۶۱, while the recognition of this spiritual supremacy by another wife of the Prophet, 'a'ishah, who also excluded herself from the ahl al-bayt, appears in Sahih Muslim (Cairo, many different editions), ed. 'Isa al-Halabi,

.vol. ۲, ۳۶۸, vol ۱۵, ۱۹۴; as well as Sahih Bukhari (Cairo, ۱۹۳۲) vol I, ۳۹, and Tirmidhi V. ۳۱

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Editor's Note: The author refers to al-Kawthar, [the Fountain], the titled bestowed [۵۴] upon the Prophet's daughter, Fatimah al-Zahra', the wife of 'Ali, the First Imam, and the mother of the eleven Imams that followed. According to some Shi'ite sources, Surat al-Kawthar was revealed by Almighty Allah regarding the birth of Fatimah al-Zahra'.

Editor's Note: For an analysis of the genesis of Wahhabism, see Hamid Algar, [۵۵] Wahhabism: A Critical Essay. Oneonta (N.Y.): Islamic Publications International, ۲۰۰۲. See also, Wahhabism by Ayatullah Ja'far Subhani.

Editor's Note: Martin Luther (۱۴۸۳-۱۵۴۶) was the leader of the Protestant Reformation. [۵۶] By labeling 'Abd al-Wahhab as the "Luther of the Arab World," the author wishes to stress the similarities between Protestant and Wahhabi reformism. Luther, like 'Abd al-Wahhab, was opposed to all metaphysical speculations, that is, to any interpretation which was not strictly literal. Luther, like 'Abd al-Wahhab, was a rigid and uncompromising moralist and Luther, like 'Abd al-Wahhab was a simpleton, devoid of intellectual lucidity. When the author makes an analogy between Luther and 'Abd al-Wahhab, he does so to stress the dry, literalist and fundamentalist spirit of these Christian and Muslim innovators. While Luther is widely considered a "reformer," he did not reform Christianity in the least bit. Protestantism remained the same as the Catholic Church from which it separated: Trinitarian, believing in the divinity of Jesus, in his incarnation and crucifixion. The only thing that Luther instituted was a moral reform, a reform in customs, in much the same way as 'Abd al-Wahhab did. If the author has compared these two figures it is because they wanted to adjust the sense of the scripture to their own literal interpretation. Furthermore, both figures manifested a narrow-minded, fundamentalist and fanatical spirit. If Netton is justified in saying that "Ibn al-'Arabi is the Meister Eckhart of the Islamic tradition," the author is amply authorized to compare 'Abd al-Wahhab to Luther, particularly considering the audience to which the book is addressed: the Western World. As the Qur'an says, speak to the people in the language of the people (۱۴:۱۴).

In the present-day Shi'ite world, reformist figures include the philosopher 'Abd al-Karim Soroush, often likened to Martin Luther, and Ayatullah al-Uzma Yusuf Sana'i who is at the head of what has been described as a full fledged Islamic Reformation, an event comparable in

many ways to the Christian Reformation of the ۱۶th century. Sana'i has passed many modernist reformist rulings. He allows sex change operations under certain circumstances (Fathi). He has legalized abortion in the first trimester, and not only due to a mother's health and fetal abnormalities. He believes that "under some conditions--such as parents' poverty or overpopulation--then abortion is allowed." The Ayatullah even writes letters of consent for women to take to their doctors (Wright). He believes in a slack enforcement of hijab: "There is no need for admonishing against women who leave their hair uncovered if it is considered as inefficient, let alone other stages of probed to do evil. As it is with responsible people if they know it efficient to stop them" (Hamshahri Newspaper). His attitude toward nikah al-mut'ah is the most restrictive of all Shi'ite scholars. In his view, "temporary marriage basically is not a lawful revelry in Islam or something parallel to permanent marriage. So for those whose wives are available and they can provide their sexual needs with her, temporary marriage, even with Muslim women is problematic, in my idea, and even possible to prohibit" (Hamshahri). He has even ruled that: There is no oppression and denial of rights [in Islam] and all human beings are honored. And Allah says: "We have honored the children of Adam." Thus, there is no racial discrimination in Islamic laws and the black and the white are equal. There is no sexual or national discrimination either. Several years ago I suggested to Ayatullah al-Uzma Lankarani that an edict prohibiting racism would be in order. He explained that no edict was required for such a matter as "Islam has abolished racism." Rulings and edicts are only required for new issues and developments. There is no need for a fatwa against racism because Islam clearly condemns racial discrimination. The populist apologetic edicts of Sana'i, who is described as "Khomeini's feminist protégé," find ample support among liberals, reformists, feminists and non-Muslims. Nonetheless, Sana'i had made some important rulings regarding women's rights which are most welcomed, namely: "Blood money for intended-like murder of women and men is equal and this is provable from reasons of blood money" (Hamshahri); and "Studying science and jurisprudence cannot be excluded to men, since all humans are encouraged to study and they can have

all decrees of judgment, jurisprudence, authoring, and leadership" (Hamshahri). Women are thus equal before the law and free to assume

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.any role within society

Editor's Note: Ibn al-'Arabi (۱۱۶۵-۱۲۴۰) is perhaps the most famous mystic of Islam. His [۵۷] chief works, Fusus al-hikam and Al-futuhat al-makkiyyah [The Meccan Revelations] form an encyclopedia of Sufi doctrines. The attitudes of philosophers towards Ibn al-'Arabi are .divided

Editor's Note: Saudi petrol dollars, the CIA, and the Israeli secret services, are [۵۸] accused of spreading the Wahhabi ideology worldwide. See, Richard Labevière's Dollars .for Terror

Author's Note: For the eschatological notion of the Parusia of the Twelfth Imam al- [۵۹] Mahdi, the Hidden and Awaited Imam, see Corbin, "L'Imam et la rénovation de l'homme dans la théologie shi'ite" in Erannos-Jahrbuch (Zurich ۱۹۶۰), XXVIII, ۸۷; Mutahhari and Baqir al-Sadr, L'Imam Occulto (Roma ۱۹۸۷), translated and edited by Palazzi; 'Allamah Tabataba'i, Shi'ite Islam (Qum ۱۴۰۹/۱۹۸۹), especially chapters VII, ۲۱۰-۲۱۴; as well as Shaykh al-Mufid's Kitab al-irshad: The Book of Guidance (Tehran ۱۳۷۷), with a preface by .Nasr and translated by Howard, IX, ۵۲۴-۵۵۱

Editor's Note: Numerous traditions establish Imam Mahdi's role as religious reformer. ,According to the Sixth Imam, "When the Qa´im

peace be on him, rises, he will summon the people to Islam anew and guide them to a matter which had become lost and from which people had gone astray. He is only called the Mahdi [the one who guides] because he guides to a matter from which [men] have .(deviated. He is only called the Qa'im [the one who rises] because of his rising (Mufid ۵۵۱

Editor's Note: Ta'wil can be translated as spiritual hermeneutics. Literally, it means to [۶۰] go to the origin of a thing. As Nasr explains, "[i]t means to penetrate the external aspect of any reality, whether it be sacred scripture or phenomena of nature, to its inner essence, to go from the phenomenon to the noumenon" (Shi'ite Islam ۸۵). According to Nwyia , Sunni exegesis is a tafsir , an explication of the text at the level of the letter of alfaz whereas Shi'ite exegesis is more of a ta'wil, that is, an interpretation at the level of the ma'na: it seeks, beyond the literal sense, the hidden sense, the secret of which belongs to the ahl al-bayt, the Family of the Prophet (۳۳). The book then becomes an esoteric

revelation, a sealed treasure which can only be opened by the Imams, the retainers of ta'wil and the guardians of the book (۳۳). To speak of Sunni exegesis as literal and Shi'ite exegesis as profound is a groundless generalization since most tafasir, of both branches, is simply tafsir, commentary. It is only the Gnostics, of both branches, who have interpreted the Qur'an according to the ta'wil. Nwyia's comments need to be further qualified as they imply an inaccessibility of the Scripture to all but an exclusive elite of initiated, the Prophet and His Family. As Imam Khumayni explains, "The Qur'an is like a banquet from which everyone must partake according to his capacity. It belongs to ,everyone

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not to any particular group; there is a share in it for everyone" (Islam and Revolution ۴۲۴); "The Qur'an possesses everything. It is like a vast banquet that God has spread out in front of all humanity and that everyone partakes of according to his appetite" (۴۱۴). "The highest share," however, "is reserved for the one to whom it was revealed: 'The only person who truly knows the Qur'an is he who was addressed by it'" (۴۱۵); "only he who was addressed by it fully understands it" (۳۹۳-۹۴); "Full benefit can be drawn from the Qur'an only by the man to whom it was addressed--The Messenger of God" (۳۹۲). "All others are deprived of such complete benefit," he continues, "unless they attain it by means of instruction from him, as was the case with the awliyya'." (۳۹۲). "We can understand only a given aspect or dimension of the Qur'an; interpretation of the rest depends upon the ahl al-'ismah (۳۶۵-۶۶). This is consistent with the Qur'anic verse which states that: "We bequeathed the Book on those of Our servants We chose" (۳۵:۳۲). As Imam Khu'i explains, "the knowledge of the Qur'an's reality is exclusively with the Imams (A) and others do not have a share in it." The Prophet made it clear that personal interpretation of the Qur'an was forbidden. He stated that: "Whoever interprets the Qur'an according to his opinion, let him seek his abode in the fire" (Tirmidhi); and "He who makes tafsir according to his own opinion has become an unbeliever" (Kashani and Ibn Al-'Arabi qtd in Murata ۲۲۷). The interpretation of the Qur'an lies with the Prophet and the Holy Imams for as Imam al-Sadiq has said: "We are the custodians of Allah's affairs, the treasurers of Allah's knowledge and the containers of Allah's revelation" (Kulayni ۲:۱ ۷۴: .(hadith ۵۰۵

:Editor’s Note: As Imam Khumayni explains [۶۱]

The Qur’an indicates that it descended to the Prophet: ‘The Trusted Spirit descended with it to your heart’ (۲۶:۱۹۳). The Qur’an underwent a descent to the Prophet by means of the Trusted Spirit so that it might be received by him at his station. In the same connection, God says: ‘We sent it [the Qur’an] down on the Night of Power’ (۹۷:۱); that is, ‘We sent it down in its entirety to the Prophet on the Night of Power, in the form of a manifestation.’ First, the Qur’an was in the keeping of the Trusted Spirit, and then it underwent a descent .in order to enter the heart of the Prophet

The Qur’an descended, then, from level to level, from degree to degree, until finally it assumed a verbal form. The Qur’an is not verbal in substance; it does not pertain to the audiovisual realm ... When the manifestation of God Almighty emerges from the unseen and descends to the world of nature or bodies, there is a vast distance separating this lowest degree from the infinite realms of the unseen, and beyond them, the first appearance of that manifestation. There is a correspondingly vast distance separating our perception from that of those superior to us, at the pinnacle of whom stand the (awliyya’ and the prophets of God. (Islamic Revolution ۳۹۳

The Qur’an is a mystery, a mystery within a mystery, a mystery veiled and enveloped in mystery. It was necessary for the Qur’an to undergo a process of descent in order to arrive at the lowly degree of man. Even its entry into the heart of the Prophet was a descent, and from there it had to descend still further in order to become intelligible to (others. (۴۰۹

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.(Or, as the Prophet put it, "This Qur'an is God's banquet" (Darimi qtd. in Murata ٢٩١

.Editor's Note: As well as Imam al-'Asr, the Imam of the Age [۶٢]

Editor's Note: René Guénon became a Sufi Muslim in ١٩١٢ under the [۶٣]

influence of 'Abdul-Hadi (١٨۶٩-١٩١٧), formerly known as Yvan Aguéli, a Swedish painter who was a convert to Islam. Upon taking his shahadah, Guénon adopted the name 'Abd al-Wahid Yahya. Shortly thereafter, he received the barakah, namely, the spiritual initiatory influence of Muslim mysticism from 'Abd al-Rahman Alish al-Kabir, a shaykh of the Shadhili order.Guénon left Paris in ١٩٣٠ and moved to Cairo, where he lived the rest of his life as a Sufi, married to Fatma Hanem, the daughter of Shaykh Muhammad Ibrahim, with whom he had four children, two girls and two boys, Ahmad and 'Abd al-Wahid. Since the ١٩٣٠s, he had been surrounded by numerous European "disciples" who were drawn to Islam and Sufism, including Frithjof Schuon who visited him in Cairo in ١٩٣۵, as well as Titus Ibrahim Burckhardt, Martin Lings, whose Muslim name is Abu Bakr Siraj, Michel Mustafa Vâlsan, and others. René Guénon was the restorer or reviver of traditional thought in the West and its most eloquent exponent. Subscribing to the doctrine of perennialism, the Traditionalists believe that all "traditional" religions share the same essence. They believe that salvation can be found by means of Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. They reject Sikhism, Baha'ism, and other newer religions, sects, and cults. The Traditionalist movement divided in ١٩۴٨-۵٠ after a split between Guénon and the Swiss Sufi Shaykh Frithjof Schuon (١٩٠٧-٩٨), founder of the Maryamiyyah tariqah. As Mark Sedgwick explains, Traditionalism was developed in different directions by Schuon and by two other followers of Guénon: Baron Julius Evola (١٨٩۶/٨-١٩٧۴), and the scholar Mircea Eliade (١٩٠٧-٨۶) who had a far-reaching influence in American academia. Over the second hald of the twentieth century, "Schuon's Sufi order remained secret, but grew in influence in Europe and America, and in Iran under the leadership of Seyyed Hossein Nasr (١٩٣٣-). Although many of Guénon's followers .professed the shahadah, not all Guénonian Traditionalists are Muslims

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Guénon died in ۱۹۵۱, shorty after become a naturalized Egyptian. Unlike Henry Corbin, who left no Muslim followers, René Guénon brought hundreds of thousands of people into Islam in France, the United States, Latin America, Spain and Portugal. Like many Sunni Muslims, Guénon had many misconceptions about Shi'ites. He did acknowledge, however, that all Islamic spirituality was Shi'ite, in the true sense of the term. There are those who wish to dismiss Guénon for

being a Freemason, however, it should be recalled that he wrote strong articles against modern Masonry and was even a member of the magazine La France Antimaçonique. It must be recalled that Masonic Lodges operate independently. There is also a major difference between the Masonry practiced in France and the Masonry practiced in Scotland, for example. Guénon was opposed to the modern, anti-traditional, Speculative Masonry, not the traditional Operative Masonry of the middle Ages which build magnificent cathedrals. The original Freemasons disappeared in the XVII century and were replaced by a speculative Masonry based on Protestant ideas of free thought and progress. Despite being a Mason, Guénon lived and died as a pious Muslim, having .brought many Masons into the fold of Islam

Author's Note: See R. Guénon, Introduction général à l'étude des doctrines hindoues. [۶۴] .III ۳

Editor's Note: The Vedanta is the orthodox Hindu school of philosophy concerned chiefly .with the latter part of the Vedas, the four books of the ancient Hindu scripture

Editor's Note: Hence, the goal of Islamic hermeneutics is to establish a balance [۶۵] between the letter of the law and its spirit; not focus exclusively the letter of the law as the Wahhabis and Salafis do; nor focus exclusively on the spirit of the law as some .mystics do

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Editor's Note: While Wahhabism aims to cleanse Islam of what its adherents view as [۶۶] innovations, deviances, heresies and idolatries, most historians (both Arab and non-Arab) hold that Wahhabism is in fact a new form of Islam, containing many changes in both theology and practice. Shaykh Hisham Kabbani from the Islamic Supreme Council of America has estimated that ۸۰٪ of mosques in the United States follow the Wahhabi .ideology. He was criticized, however, for failing to substantiate his claim

Editor's Note: They accuse ahl al-sunnah and ahl al-bayt of innovations when they [۶۷] .themselves are the greatest of innovators

Editor's Note: An example of Wahhabi scriptural deviation includes the application to [۶۸] Muslims of Qur'anic verses that were specifically revealed regarding polytheists. For a contentious overview of Wahhabi /Salafi beliefs, see Zubair Qamar's "Wahhabism: Understanding the Roots and Role Models of Islamic Fanaticism and Terror" and Fayad ".Ahmad's "Some Beliefs of the Sipah e Sahaba and Lashkar e Jhangavi

Editor's Note: As Asaf Fyzee observes, "As for 'orthodoxy', a minority, however small, [۶۹] may well have retained a very close touch with the original tradition; the majority, however preponderent, may conceivably have lost it in the stresss of political conflicts" (۳-۴).

Editor's Note: Suhrawardi was the founder of the School of Illumination in which the [۷۰] .symbolism of light and darkness prevails

Editor's Note: Neo-Pythagoreanism refers to the doctrines of an Alexandrian school of [۷۱] philosophy (۱st c. A.D.) which put a mystical interpretation on many Pythagorean ideas. Pythagoras (c. ۵۸۰-c. ۵۰۰ B.C.) was a Greek mathematician and philosopher. He founded the Pythagorean School which believed in metempsychosis, that the soul imprisoned in the body could be purified by study, and followed a strict discipline of purity and self-.examination

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Editor's Note: Hermeticism pertains to alchemy or magic relating to the writings [۷۲] .attributed to Hermes Trismegistus

Editor's Note: The Sabeans were a sect from Harran which followed astrological [۷۳] doctrines. According to some interpretations, they were Manicheists. They are not to be confused the inhabitants of Saba mentioned in the Qur'an. These latter developed a flourishing kingdom (c. ۹۳۰-c. ۱۱۵ B.C.) in South Arabia. They are mentioned in the Qur'an .but are no longer extant

Author's Note: Both the origin and meaning of the term Sabean is uncertain, and many etymologies have been suggested to define it. Many linguists lean towards the Arabic verb Sabba (convert, namely, one who receives the "baptism" instituted by John the Baptist). The term Sabba is known to Arabic-speaking Muslims and the Sabeans are mentioned in the Qur'an (۵:۷۳; ۲:۵۹; ۲۲:۱۷) as People of the Book. The title of "Baptists" is based on the regular use of baptism as a religious discipline. It is for this reason that the Christian Patriarchs refered to them by the Greek term emerobaptistai, namely, those who practice baptism on a daily basis. Even the term Soubaioi was known among Greek writers. Nevertheless, the most common name used in religious literature is that of Nasoreans, from the Arabic Nasara). This extraordinary coincidence is startling since the Nasoreans are not the least bit inclined to

Christianity. On the contrary, they look down upon it and detest it. Their doctrines are also far removed from Christian beliefs, with the exception of the belief in a Saviour, and some superficial similarities their ceremonies have with Christian rites. It has also been argued that the term Sabean is derived from the Hebrew Saba [one who walks]; the Ethiopian Sbh [scattered souls], and even the Syrian Sb [to baptize]. Some claim that the term probably derives from the Egyptain root sba which means "star-guide" and "star-god." This is quite possible as the Sabeans of Harran were the ancient Chaldeans who professed a doctrine containing neo-Pythagorean and Hermetic elements. As such, they were the last representatives of Alexandrine Hermetic gnosis. They are those with whom the prophet Abraham dealt with since he was born among "star-worshippers." Muslim researchers have identified the Sabeans of Harran as the true Sabeans mentioned in the Qur'an and which are described as "star-worshippers" and "idol-worshippers." Both practices were very common among the Sabeans of Harran and Abraham struggled

against them. Harran was founed as a city some ۴,۰۰۰ years ago, as a business post for the city of Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, located on the commercial route of Mesopotamia. Despite the fact that they worshipped idols and celestial bodies, the Sabeans of Harran believed in one God, IL, unique and unknowable, beyond the comprehension of His creatures. They also believed in the need for messengers of God to educate humankind. The Sabeans believed that they had received their religión from Seth, the son of Adam, which is why they are identified with the Gnostic Sethians and with Idris or Enoch who is usually identified with Hermes Trismegisto. The Islamic tradition recognized Hermes or Enoch as a prophet. The names Hermes, Idri or Enoch all refer to the same Person. Sabeanism flourished from the ۹th to the ۱۰th centuries under Islamic rule. They Sabeans produced philosophers, astronomers, medical doctors, and botanists. The most distinguished figure from that renaissance was the great Sabean astronomer Thabib Ibn Qurrah, one of the main trasmittors of ancient science to Islam, who attempted, unfruitfully to reform his religion and to free it from the superstitions of its priests. In the year ۷۱۷, the Caliph Umar the Second, founded the first Islamic university in Harran. To get the university off on a good foot, the Caliph invited the last Hermenesian philosophers from Alexandria to move to Harran. In the ۹th century A.D., there existed .four hermenesian schools in Harran

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Editor's Note: Like Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi , the author does not deny the existence of [۷۴] foreign elements among the Muslim Gnostics or Sufis. Both scholars assert the originality of Islamic Gnosis. This does not, however, mean that they condone whatever has been called gnosis or Sufism in Islam since many of the views and manners of behaviour of the Sufi Orders are disputable. The key to differentiating between a true Muslim mystic and a pseudo-Sufi charlatan is the respect, application and practice of the shari'ah. There can be no esoteric without its exoteric grounding. It was these pseudo-Sufis who were cursed by the Imams, and not the true followers of the spiritual path. For more on the image of .the path in Islam, refer to our article on this subject

Editor's Note: Epicureans were the followers of Epicurus (۳۴۱-۲۷۰ B.C.), an Athenian [۷۵] atomist philosopher. He regarded sense perception as the only basis of knowledge and believed that material objects throw off images which enter our senses. He considered the highest good to be pleasure, but this meant freedom from pain and emotional upheaval, achieved not through sensual indulgence but through the practice of virtue. His .teachings formed the basis of the De rerum natura of Lucretius

Editor's Note: The Cynics were members of a school of Greek philosophy founded by [۷۶] Antisthenes. They taught that virtue is the only good and that it is to be won by self-.control and austerity, not by social conventions

Editor's Note: Bilal Philips is thus in error when he wishes to link Shi'ite and Mutazilite [۷۷] .(philosophy (۵

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Author's Note: For the ikhwan al-safa', see S.H. Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic [۷۸] Cosmological Doctrines (London ۱۹۷۸), ۱, I to IV, ۲۵-۱۰۴; Islamic Life and Thought (London .۱۹۸۱), especially chapters ۱۰ and ۱۱

Editor's Note: Henry Corbin privately professed to be a Shi'ite Muslim mystic. He [۷۹] acknowledged his belief in the secret of Shi'ism, namely, the existence of the Living Imam. 'Allamah Tabataba'i, Ayatullah Hasanzadeh Amoli, Seyyed Huseini Tehrani, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have all attested to Corbin's acceptance of Twelver Shi'ism. It is said that Corbin performed the pilgrimage to Makkah with Nasr. A perusal of Corbin's scholarship, however, demonstrates his interest in "spiritual Shi'ism," consisting of the ghulat, the Isma'ilis, Babis, and even the Baha'i, as opposed to "official Shi'ism," namely, the mainstream legal tradition of Twelver Shi'ism. Despite claiming to

be a Twelver Shi'ite, he stated that there was nothing outside of Isma'ili philosophy. Corbin was also closely vinculated with the Shaykhi, a Sufi tariqah which has been controlled by the Baha'i since the early twentieth century. As a result of these influences, Corbin has distorted many Twelver Shi'ite concepts and terms. Rather than leading to Twelver Shi'ism, his work has led his followers towards Isma'ilism and Baha'ism. According to Ismael Velasco, Corbin's work "constitutes a philosophical bridge between the Babi -Baha'i Faiths and the philosophical and religious matrix within which they were conceived" and may be seen "as a veritable Prolegomenon to the study of Babi and Baha'i scripture." In the words of Velasco, "Corbin followed the thread of Islamic spirituality from the Twelve Imams at its genesis, to the Shaykhi school at its terminus." As those familiar with Islamic philosophy will attest, this is a straight path to Baha'ism, something Luis Alberto Vittor has been arguing for years. In fact, Vittor was the first to point out the importance of Corbin to Baha'ism, suggesting the possibility that he may have actually been a Baha'i. See, for example, "La fe bahai y la contra-tradición en el mundo islámico," a paper read on October ۲۳rd, ۱۹۹۷ at the Joseph de Maistre Institute of Traditional Studies in Buenos Aires, and amplification and expansion of an article previously published in Atma-Jñana. Revista Bimestral de Síntesis Espiritual ۸ (Buenos Aires ۱۹۹۰): ۱۷-۲۹; "Guénon y la iniciación en el esoterismo islámico" a paper read on August ۲۳ rd, ۲۰۰۱, during the Primera Semana Guenoniana de Buenos Aires, celebrated in the Library of Congress, as well as the article "El Concepto del ta'wil desde la perspectiva fenomenológica de H. .Corbin" in the cultural suplement Letras e Ideas ۱۸ (Buenos Aires ۱۹۹۱): ۳-۸

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Editor’s Note: Editor’s Note: Frithjof Schuon (۱۹۰۷-۱۹۹۸) was a German-Swiss scholar. A [۸۰] convert to Islam, his Muslim name was ‘isa Nur al-Din Ahmad. He was a student of René Guénon, founder of the Traditionalist theory, with whom he broke from in ۱۹۵۰. He claimed to have been visited by the Virgin Mary in the ۱۹۶۰s. According to Schuon, the Virgin Mary gave him the universal message of proclaiming the transcendental unity of religion. As a result of this series of visions, he formed his own tariqah known as the Maryamiyyah. It should be stressed that the Maryamiyyah, which was named after the Virgin Mary, was an invention of Schuon, who claimed she had invested him from on

high. In an interview with the magazine Vers la tradition Khaled Bentounès, the present Shaykh of the tariqah ‘Alawiyyah categorically denied any ties between Schuon’s group and the mother tariqah from ۱۹۵۴ onwards. As such, there was a clear rupture in the silsilah, the chain of transmission, which is an essential compoment of the spiritual universe of Islamic initiatory orders. While Shaykh Bentounès does not deny the value of Schuon’s work, he views the Swiss as a scholar and not as a spiritual guide. In his article “René Guénon y la iniciación en el esoterismo islámico” (Buenos Aires ۲۰۰۱), Luis Alberto :Vittor makes the following observation

As is well known, while Schuon was living in Paris in the early ۱۹۳۰s, he wrote to Guénon, then a resident of Cairo, asking his advice as to which “spiritual guide” he should associate himself with. Before receiving a response from Guénon, Schuon moved from Paris to Marseilles. While at a zawiyyah with some Algerian fuqara’ from the tariqah ‘Alawiyyah, he was persuaded to pay a visit to Shaykh Ahmad Mustafa al-‘Alawi. In the middle of all this turbulence, he received the response from Guénon advising him to head to Mostagan to contact Shaykh al-‘Alawi. This answer finally convinced Schuon, who set off to Mostagan in ۱۹۳۲, to join the tariqah of Shayh al-‘Alawi. It was in Mostagan that Schuon embraced Islam, adopting the Muslim name ‘isa Nur al-Din. By this time, Guénon had already established ties with Shaykh Salama Radi, the founder of the tariqah Hamdiyyah Shadhiliyyah, whom he met on his way to Mosque of Seyyidna al-Husain where he regularly went to pray. In order to avoid controversy, and simple “refutations,” we will not pass judgment, but merely pose the question. Why did Guénon advise Schuon to go to Mostagan to contact Shaykh al-‘Alawi rather than having him contact his own shaykh in Cairo? Perhaps some passages intersperced through his letters may give us a hint. In a letter dated November ۱st, ۱۹۲۷, Guénon made the following comments regarding the

opening of a zawiyyah of the tariqah 'Alawiyyah in Paris: "It seems that this brotherhood is spreading to great extent. I have been also been informed that it has a zawiya in Paris, on Boulevard Saint-Germain, a few steps from here. Otherwise, it arouses suspicion that ".it might become too open and can mislead like many others

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:In another letter dated December ۳۱st, ۱۹۲۷, he repeats

I think I already mentioned that the Alawis have a center in Paris which is aimed exclusively at Arabs and Kabyles. Although I have been invited to contact them I have not had time to do so, despite the fact that I am close by. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to see it, as it might be more interesting than the brotherhood presently in formation and in which Europeans will also be admitted. As I believe I already mentioned, the .introduction of Western elements can easily become a cause of misguidance

Note that both passages correspond to letters written in ۱۹۲۷, three years before Schuon requested Guénon to recommend him a spiritual guide. A detractor of Schuon might easily wonder why Guénon directed him to the tariqah 'Alawiyyah when he apparently disapproved of the openess to Western elements manifested by the Parisian zawiyyah. It is not our aim to examine the reasons why led Schuon to deviate from straight path. It suffices to say that it is likely related, consciously or subconsciously, to the influence of anti-traditional forces which made him a mere instrument. One must wonder whether Guénon viewed Schuon as one of those destructive Western influences through which misguidance might enter Islam. Later developments regarding the devious practises and innovations made by Schuon seem to give credence to those who affirm that Guénon had perceived the shadow of his twisted spirituality. It should be stressed that Shaykh 'Abd al-Wahid Yahya never had issues with the tariqah 'Alawiyyah itself as its chain of initiation is legitimate and unobjectionable. He only concern was that one of its branches in the West might undermine traditional principles, distorting its teachings, and introducing innovations. As for Luis Alberto Vittor and me, we have no doubts that these were the concerns of Guénon as we have both observed deviant developments throughout the .Western world

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Whether Schuon was a bonafide Sufi Shaykh revolves around the famous ijazah he received from the hands of Shaykh Adda Ben Tunisi. Luis Alberto Vittor was fortunate enough to have an Arabic copy of the ijazah before his own eyes, graciously provided to :him by ex-members of the tariqah. As he explains in his article

From the beginning of Schuon's trip to Mostagan and his contact with Shaykh al-'Alawi, a great misunderstanding developed which we now hope to clarify. This misunderstanding--which has nothing to do with the tariqah 'Alawiyyah--revolves around the supposed ijazah [authorization] that Schuon had received as muqaddam

delegate] at the hands of Shaykh Adda Ben Tunisi, the successor of Shaykh al-'Alawi,] allegedly authorizing him to initiate others in the Western world. The dispute between Schuon and Guénon derives precisely from a misinterpretation of the contents of the licence, particularly with regards to the true role Schuon was supposed to play as muqaddam. In the famous document, whose Arabic original we have before our eyes, Shaykh Adda Ben Tunisi clearly says: qad adhintu fi nashr al-da'wah al-islamiyyah [I grant him permission to call people to Islam], talqin kalimat at-tawhid: La ilaha illa Allah [to preach the profession of faith: There is no god but Allah], and most importantly, to teach al-wajibat al-diniyyah [the religious obligations]. This means that Shaykh Adda Ben Tunisi merely gave Schuon a permission [idhn] to do da'wah, namely, to spread the message of Islam in the West, that is, to teach the basic exoteric aspects of the religion. The Shaykh did not, in any means, grant him the authority to act as a spiritual guide or initiator...On the basis of the evidence, Shaykh Adda Ben Tunisi never authorized Schuon to transmit the tariqah to others. Guénon himself seems to have been confused with respect to the reach and restrictions of the permission [idhn] since in a letter dated July ۷th, ۱۹۴۹, he writes: "In any event, Shaykh 'isa's title of muqaddam, with the power of transmission ".which it implies, cannot be questioned

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In all fairness, we must admit that the "permission" [idhn] which Schuon received from Shaykh Adda Ben Tunisi does not specifically grant the authority to initiate others into Islamic esoterism. Schuon had claimed to have the ijazah of Shaykh al-'Alawi and Guénon, out of good faith, had accepted his word. The ijazah in question, however, merely mentions that Schuon is designated the muqaddam or representative of the Shaykh with regards to simple daily observances, the basic, elementary teachings used to spread the exoteric or universal pillars of Islam. In other words, the license given by Shaykh Adda Ben Tunisi only permits Schuon to fulfil the basic works which every Muslim must accomplish de motu propio [on his own] and which does not require any special permission. Schuon may have been a great scholar, philosopher, and talented artist; he .was not, however, a certified shaykh of the 'Alawiyyah Order

In ۱۹۵۴, Schuon cut his ties with the tariqah 'Alawiyyah, abruptly breaking the chain of initiation in a fashion which, to say the least, is

entirely unusual. The break was formalized when Schuon founded his own, entirely autonomous, tariqah, separate from the mother branch, and which he eventually named the Maryamiyyah. By breaking ties with the tariqah 'Alawiyyah of Mostagan in ۱۹۵۴, Schuon created a Sufi order which was totally anomalous. Unlike other orders, it was devoid of any silsilah or initiatic chain of transmission. In the Sufi world, any tariqah needs to provide a silsilah tracing its spiritual lineage back to the Prophet, thus assuring its authenticity. It is perhaps due to this reason that Guénon described the Maryamiyyah as a "vague 'universalist' order." In a letter from Cairo dated October ۹th ۱۹۵۰, Guénon says: ...in Lausanne, the ritual observances have been reduced to a strict minimum. Most of them no longer fast during the month of Ramadan. I never thought things could reach such a point. It seems that I was entirely correct when I said that, soon enough, it would no longer be a tariqah h but a vague "universalist" order, more or less like the disciples of Vîvêkânanda! In yet another of his letters from Cairo dated September ۱۸th ۱۹۵۰, Guénon makes the following observations with regards to Schuon, Burckhardt, and other members of the tariqah Maryamiyyah: On the other hand, I received a letter from Burckhardt regarding my responses to M.L. [Martin Lings] saying that "the violence of my letters has deeply troubled him, and that he cannot understand the reasons for such severe remarks." It seems to me that it should not be very difficult to understand! ... It is shocking how far bad faith can go. I, for one, am not the least bit surprised since, from a

technical point of view, the ignorance of those people, starting with F.S. [Frithjof Schuon] himself, if truly frightening… Ex-members of the Maryamiyyah have revealed disturbing information about its founder and the ritual practices of the secretive tariqah to several Muslim scholars, including a Shaykh from the Jerrahi Order. Some of the early followers of Schuon included Marco Pallis, Charles Le Gai Eaton, John Levy, and Léo Schaya. The Swiss born Charles Le Gai Eaton (۱۹۲۲-) embraced Islam in ۱۹۵۱ and is presently a consultant to the Islamic Cultural Center in London. Other Schuonian writers include: Thomas Merton, Huston Smith, Jean Borella, Joseph Epes Brown, Titus Burckhardt, Rama Coomaraswamy, Keith Critchlow, James Cutsinger, Victor Danner, Michael Oren ,Fitzgerald, Martin Lings

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Jean-Louis Michon, Vali Reza Nasr, Osman Bakar, Roger du Pasquier, Whithall Perry, Philip Sherrard, Huston Smith, and William Stoddardt. Seyyed Hossein Nasr was a member of the Maryamiyya tariqah, a discipline of Schuon, and is now his most influential student. Dr. Mark Sedgwick's academic website, traditionalism.org, describes Nasr as ."the leading Maryami author" who took over from Schuon

[۸۱] Editor's Note: As Nasr notes, "the voices of Louis Massignon, H.A.R. Gibb, and Henry Corbin, followed by a later generation of sympathetic Western scholars like Annemarie Schimmel, remain truly exceptional" (Heart of Islam xii). It would also be worthwhile to .add Sachiko Murata to this list

[۸۲] Editor's Note: As Murad Wilfried Hofmann explains in his review of Muhammad Mustafa al-Azimi's History of the Qur'anic Text, Christian demagogues like John of Damascus, Peter the Venerable, Raymundus Lull, and Martin Luther, followed by infamous Jewish, Christian or secularist Orientalists like Julius Wellhausen, Gustav Flügel, Theodor Nöldeke, Ignaz Goldziher, Alphonse Mingana, Snouck Hurgronje or Joseph Schacht, all did their best to prove that Islam was a corrupted Jewish-Christian copy, .based on forged ahadith, without any originality or saving grace

[۸۳] Editor's Note: As Hector Abu Dharr Manzolillo explains in his article "Los 'conversos' en países con minorías musulmanas," revealed religions correspond to different steps along the same path to spiritual perfection. Hence, going from Judaism to Christianity and from .Christianity to Islam is part of a logical continuation established by God

[۸۴] Author's Note: See M. Cruz Hernández, "Los estudios islamólogos en España en los siglos XIX y XX" in A. Heredia Soriano (ed.), Exilios filosóficos de España (Salamanca ۱۹۹۰): ۴۹۰. Editor's Note: The author is playing the devil's advocate with Orientalists. Even if scholars subject Islam to the most rigid and merciless scientific analysis, Islam, even as .an allegedly man-made religion, comes out on top

p: ۱۳۳

Editor's Note: As Nasr notes, "most of these orientalists studied Islam in the arrogant [۸۵] belief that they possessed a flawless scientific method that applied universally to all .(religions" (Heart of Islam xii

Editor's Note: The Islamic attitude, however, is not that Muslims copied Christians who [۸۶] copied Jews who copied Egyptians and Babylonians but that the similarities between their legislation can be accounted for the fact that they come from the same eternal source: .God

Editor's Note: The Western concept of religion is narrow. The Eastern concept of [۸۷] .religion is much broader and encompasses all aspects of human existence

Editor's Note: According to Islamic sources, the hundreds of prophecies signaling the [۸۸] End of Days have been fulfilled. Only the final major signs remain: the appearance of the anti-Christ, the return of

Imam Mahdi along with Jesus, the Messiah; and the sun rising in the West which, for some, is not meant to be taken literally and refers to the rise of Islam in the Western .world

Editor's Note: This is an allusion to the Qur'anic verse: "To Allah We belong, and to Him [۸۹] is our return" (۲:۱۵۶) and (۴۹:۱۳). The author is also alluding to the prophetic traditions .concerning God creating everything out of his own light

Editor's Note: We remember vividly how Nigosian, our religious studies professor at [۹۰] the University of Toronto, started his class on world religions: "Religion is the product of the human imagination..." For many such scholars, atheism is the basis for the "scientific" .study of religion

p: ۱۳۴

Author’s Note: See Henry Daniel-Rops, La vida cotidiana en Palestina en tiempo de [۹۱] Jesús (Buenos Aires ۱۹۶۱), III, ۱, ۳۸۲-۸۳; as well as Hans-Joachim Schoeps, El judeocristianismo: Formación de grupos y luchas intestinas en la cristianidad primitiva .((Valencia ۱۹۷۰: ۱۴۶-۱۵۰

Editor’s Note: Similarity between religions does not imply that they borrowed from [۹۲] .one another but rather that they have the same spiritual origin: God

CHAPTER ۲

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF SHA‘ISM

As we have seen before, “election,” “option,” and “inclination” are some of the comprehensive meanings the Greek language gave to the term hairesis. These meanings were passed into Latin, with the necessary etymological adjustments, as hoeresis which conveys the ideas of “opinion,” “dogma,” “party” and “sect.” Dictionaries define the meaning of “sect” as a “body of people sharing religious opinions who have broken away from a larger body.” It is often used as a term of disapproval and is thus inconsistent with its original meaning of “doctrine of a particular teacher who developed it and explained it and which is accepted and defended by a group of followers.” By straying from their original meanings and etymological roots, the words “heresy” and “sect” have been .applied for centuries to those who professed “false” beliefs worthy of excommunication

In this limited sense, the word “heresy” has more in common with the Hebrew term herem, meaning excommunication and anathema, and the Arabic word haram, from the root harrama, which means to deprive, to anathematize, to remove and to excommunicate. The words “heresy” and “sect” were used in ancient times to describe various schools of philosophy. Over the course of centuries, however, the terms acquired pejorative connotations which eventually came to dominate and replaced their original meanings. The terms “heresy” and “sect” came to be commonly applied to all religious groups which broke away from an original doctrine and who were in disagreement with .the dogmas and rituals which were officially orthodox

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For the Roman Catholic Church, all protestant sects born from the Reformation were, in a strict sense, "heretical" and "heterodox" from the moment they broke away from the Vatican. From around ۱۹۷۱, the term "heretic," with all of its connotations, was suppressed from the Catholic ecclesiastic lexicon.[۱] Consequently, there are no longer any "heresies," these having been replaced with "mere doctrinal errors" which do not merit excommunication. The modern mentality was evidently unsatisfied with its classical lexical heritage and along with the older terminology it developed a wide body of new definitions. The Western world uses these terms in so many contradictory ways that they do not have a constant meaning. They apply them to religious phenomenon which they view with suspicion but which they rarely try to understand. This state of confusion is created by the modern habit of calling everything into question.[۲] It is also a reflection of the total failure of the "opinion-makers" who insist on taking the concept of "sect"--as vague as it may be--as their sole starting point.

As Rudolf Otto has explained, the use and misuse of terms likes "sect" and "fundamentalism" quickly reaches an irrational point. What is most surprising, however, is that this feeble conceptual chain has been forged and molded to subject the same unknown enemy who frequently changes forms like a many-sided proteose. The multitude of contradictory definitions proposed by the "opinion-makers"--in a dry attempt to describe diversity--actually impede proper classification.

The situation further complicates itself when some Orientalists, rather than researching thought, move on to studying ideological struggles. As a result, they divide themselves between scientific and political work. If we focus so much on this issue, it is because our critical stance requires us to do so. We are well within our rights to criticize the attitude of those who, deliberately or involuntarily, by a mere concession to modern language, spread falsehood and error.[۳] It is as if the terms "sect" and "fundamentalism" were merely simple theological references or epithets without any moral implications. We must ask ourselves: Is it really possible that the richness of classical definitions and terminology has been reduced to the point of describing general ideological types?

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It should be noted that the term “sect” is unduly applied to Shi‘ite Islam without doctrinal justification and without paying attention to whether such a definition is actually compatible with its perfectly orthodox and traditional spirit. If this is not a case of terminological standardization, then what is the point of insisting on its application? Should the generic sense of “sect” be applied by default to every religious minority on the basis of the same rigid and arbitrary interpretation? We refer, of course, to those scholars who fancifully turn every minority tradition into a “sect” without considering the .true meaning of its definition

In fact, these scholars often label certain religious groups as “sects” when their followers are numerically equal to the main groups within their tradition. Certain religious minorities which are considered as “sects” in the West are perfectly orthodox religious expressions. Such is the case with Shi‘ite Islam in the Middle East, Buddhism or Taoism in the Far East, to mention some of the most common examples. But, as we have seen, the tendency to give Shi‘ite Islam the stigma of “sect” is premeditated. It is not by chance that some “opinion-makers” and Orientalists have agreed on applying this term. The definition of “sect,” as they know better than anyone else, can conveniently be substituted--in a theological and philosophical sense--by the more insidiously political and provocative one “.which defines a sect as a “group of partisans with extreme and violent ideas

Faced with simplistic and reductionist interpretations which are obsessed with grouping all religious minorities under one general label, the indiscriminate application of the term “sect” continues to be accepted. This is despite the fact that the commonly accepted meaning of the term is nothing more than a convention or a deep-rooted prejudice accepted by all without reserve. Even among educated people, the very idea of “sect” always presupposes a deep-rooted reactionary and intolerant attitude, which is how the factio [sect] can be recognized and differentiated from the other majority “factions.” If anything novel is added to this connotation, it reduces itself to concrete applications that are called upon by the same semantic concessions of language that adapt to changing circumstances. We refer specifically to the neologism “fundamentalism” which implies an entire axiological classification which, when dealing with Shi‘ite Islam, even descends to [the basest contempt.[۴

The term “fundamentalist” can be correctly applied to American Protestantism since its attitude and behavior is consistent with such a definition. However, the new tendency is to give the term a political sense linking it even more strongly with Shi‘ite Islam. The use of the term “fundamentalist” in a political sense is really a recent development. It traces back to the famous controversy between American Protestants and the supporters of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution. The dispute centered on the question as to whether state education should be separated from religion as a means to promote the atheist doctrine of evolution which is incompatible with the idea of God and divine creation.[۵] At that time, the use of the term “fundamentalist” was far from commonplace. The term “fundamentalist” has acquired a political connotation which every day is more effectively integrated into the vernacular, becoming normal in English and standard in other Western languages. It is applied to a series of Islamic groups which resist and reject any type of Western interference. It should be noted that the French prefer the term intégriste and the Spaniards the word rigorista when they try to define the same phenomenon.

Due to limitations of time and space, we cannot examine in depth the reasons why the Western world insists on applying “sectarian” and “fundamentalist” labels to Shi‘ite Islam. For the sake of brevity, we will limit ourselves to saying that the application of such terms to Shi‘ism is a form of reductionism which attempts to tarnish an entirely orthodox expression of Islam. Not only do such labels impoverish understanding and distort definitions, what is worse today is that they are used without any conceptual contact with the true reality of its thoughts and doctrine. Such definitions are often taken “lightly” because they do not destroy the doctrines of Shi‘ite Islam. Nonetheless, we must avoid indiscriminately applying such labels to Shi‘ism and other schools of thought since they imply inclusion or exclusion of Islamic doctrines on the basis of the one and only orthodoxy.

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The same definition of “sect,” with some slightly different shades, prevails among the Orientalists who wrote about Sufism and Islamic gnosis in the nineteenth century. Likewise, certain Orientalists have applied the label of “sect” to Shi‘ite Islam. They were fond of giving a Christian character to certain Shi‘ite beliefs and practices rather than recognizing them as entirely Islamic in origin. These Arabists preferred the term “sect” to that of “heresy.” They categorized Muslims on the basis of Christian standards. For them, the “heretics” were those Muslims who broke away from the doctrinal unity of the Islamic “Church” while the “sectarians” were those who broke away from its socio-political hierarchy. In this respect, it is important to remember that, Saint Augustine, particularly in his admonitions against the Pelagian, Manichaean and Donatist heresies, rejected reductionism.[۶] He categorically warned how difficult, if not impossible, it was to give a definition of “heresy” that corresponds exactly to its essential characteristics. For that reason, he warned against the temptation of labeling doctrines as “heretical” considering [how harmful the label of “heretic” can be.[۷

From a subjective psychological perspective, the characteristics of heretics include intolerance, obstinacy, rebellion and unsociability. Those who hold erroneous, misguided or false ideas, yet believe with good faith that their doctrine is the same as taught by the

Donatism is a ۴th century schism in the North African Church which followed the apostasies during the Diocletian persecutions. Donatists held that sacraments were invalid outside the one visible Church, that sinners should be excommunicated, and that the State had no rights in ecclesiastical matters. It is named after one of its leaders, Donatus, who was bishop of Carthage. The schism drew from Saint Augustine his lasting .definition of the nature of the ministry and sacraments of the Church

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[Church, cannot be labeled as heretics or sectarians.[۸

Imbued with such ideas, some Orientalists use the Catholic concept of heresy as their theoretical framework. As a result, they labeled the Sufis as heretics because they were "mystics" who believed in doctrines which differed from those of the majority orthodox Sunni "Church." Despite the fact that they profess the same fundamentals of faith, the Shi'ites were labeled as sectarian because they broke away from orthodox Sunnism. After drawing these dogmas from Christian doctrine, Orientalists rushed to apply them to Shi'ism, labeling it as "heretical," "schismatic" and "sectarian" merely because it represented a minority tradition, a fact which in se and per se [in and of itself] does not constitute heresy. They failed to heed Saint Augustine's warning that appearances can be deceiving.[۹] They reduced Shi'ism to the level of a "heretical sect" despite the fact that there are no doctrinal differences between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam. Unfortunately, some contemporary Orientalists--the heirs of the old mentality--continue to stubbornly label Shi'ism as a "sect" outside the fold of Islam. Although Shi'ites profess to be Muslims and ,share the same beliefs as Sunnis, they are, in the eyes of these specialists

[openly sectarian extremist heretics.[۱۰

In short, the tendency of some Orientalists to separate Shi'ite Islam's visible or exoteric aspects--social and political--from its esoteric aspects-- mystical and metaphysical-- started in the nineteeth century and intensified in the twentieth and early twenty-first century. According to Alessandro Bausani, the increasingly radical differentiation between a political and religious Shi'ism provides an opportunity for Arabists and Orientalists to eclipse the West from the spiritual, metaphysical and esoteric aspects of a formal traditional expression (۴: ۱۱۲-۱۵). We have reason to fear that this initiative is a last ditch effort on the part of the West to subject one of the last genuine reserves of traditional thought into an indefinite zone of relative obscurity and of temporal oversight. In other words, when some Orientalists and "opinion-makers" take interest in Shi'ite Islam, these professional polemicists are motivated by a desire to create a false and distorted image of Shi'ism, isolating and stressing its exclusively political aspect.[۱۱] Is this ?"not a most extreme case of ideological "fundamentalism

The one thing these theories--and others which are even more groundless and fanciful--have in common is a desire to single handedly understand the global reality of Shi'ite Islam in all of its dimensions: exoteric and esoteric, political and religious, metaphysical and spiritual. But in fact, the only thing they want to retain from their research is that Sunni Islam is the rule and Shi'ite Islam is the exception. The Shi'ites, they claim, view themselves as the small flock of chosen ones. They are those who split from the orthodox majority, those who were schismatic, who sought to foment dissent, spread discord and provoke division because of some political question related to the succession of the Prophet.[۱۲] As will be seen, these claims made by scholars are based exclusively on Sunni sources.[۱۳] And it is these Sunni scholars who brought the idea to Western scholars that, like the councils of the Christian Church, the election of the Caliph or successor of the .['Prophet can be decided "democratically" by means of consensus [ijma

Footnote

Editor's Note: This was an extension of the innovations agreed upon by the Second [۱] Vatican Council which was held between ۱۹۶۲ and ۱۹۶۵. It included liturgical reform, calling for mass to be held in the language of the people and not Latin, removed the requirement .for religious dress for nuns and the need for women to cover their hair while in Church

Editor's Note: Modern popular thought is characterized by cynicism and contradictory [۲] reasoning. This attitude can be traced back to Descartes who, by calling everything into .doubt, laid the foundations of modern philosophy

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:Editor's Note: The author alludes to the Qur'anic verses [۳]

There will every soul prove [the fruits of] the deeds it sent before: they will be brought back to Allah their rightful Lord, and their invented falsehoods will leave them in the lurch. ((۱۰:۳۰

In such falsehood] is but a paltry profit; but they will have a most grievous Penalty. (۱۶:] (۱۱۷

These our people have taken for worship gods other than Him: why do they not bring forward an authority clear [and convincing] for what they do? Who doth more wrong than .(such as invent a falsehood against Allah (۱۸:۱۵

Author's Note: Recent studies fully illustrate the changes the term "fundamentalism" [۴] has undergone from a theological sense to an ideological one. See E. Patlagean and A. Le Boulluec, Les retours aux Écritures: Fondamentalismes présents et passés (Louvain: Paris ۱۹۹۳); especially J. Bauberot, "Le fondamentalisme: Quelques hypothèses introductives, ibid, ۱۳-۳۰ ; J. Séguy, "Le rapport aux Écritures dans les sectes de terrain protestant" ibid ۳۱-۴۶ ; and tracing the modern misguided aberations we already denounced, we must also present the contrasting opinion of M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Réflections sur une évolution .du shi'isme duodécimain : tradition et idéologisation." Ibid ۶۳-۸۲

Editor's Note: For a scientific attempt to refute of the theory of evolution, see Harun [۵] .Yahya's Evolution Deceit

Editor's Note: Pelagianism is the "heresy" originated by Pelagius. It denied original sin [۶] and the need for baptism, and held that grace was not necessary for salvation. It asserted that free will and the law are sufficient for man to live without sin. It arose in a reaction to Gnosticism and Manichaeism, in the interests of a higher morality which Pelagius found lacking in Rome. Originally, an attempt to heighten human responsibility, it fell into the extreme of diminishing divine grace. Opposed by Saint Augustine of Hippo, the "heresy" and Pelagius were condemned by several synods (۴۱۱-۱۸). A form of the "heresy," with emphasis on free will, arose briefly (late ۵th c.) in France but was condemned (۵۲۸-۹). .Pelagianism long continued as a trend in Christian philosophy

Manichaeism is the religion founded by Mani (c. ٢١۶-c.٢٧۶), a Persian who held that the universe is dually controlled by opposing powers of good and evil, which had become intermingled in the present age, but at a future time would be separated and return to their own realms. Mani's followers were to aid this separation by leading an ascetic life. The religion spread widely in Asia and around the Mediterranean, but died out in the West by the ۶th c., although it was a major religion in the East until the ١۴th c. It influenced .several early Christian heresies

Editor's Note: The Prophet has condemned the practice of takfir, namely, accusing [٧] Muslims of being infidels and unbelievers. The Messenger of Allah has said that: "If a Muslim calls another kafir, then if he is a kafir let it be so; otherwise, he [the caller] is himself a kafir" (Abu Dawud); "No man accuses another man of being a sinner, or of being a kafir, but it reflects back on him if the other is not as he called him" (Bukhari). Likewise, the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah have warned against the takfir of Muslims. Imam Abu Hanifa said that he did not consider anyone who prays facing the qiblah [Makkah] to be a kafir and that this was the consensus of the majority of 'ulama'. He wrote in his will that "The followers of Muhammad can be sinners but they are believers, not kuffar." Imam Shafi'i said: "I do not consider anyone who prays to be a kafir on account of his sins." For more on this, see "Who is a Believer and who is an infidel?" in Nasr's The Heart of Islam. The general rule in Islam is to treat as Muslims all those who assert that they are Muslims unless their words, beliefs or actions clearly demonstrate the contrary. Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiyyah and Yazid in days of old; the Shah of Iran and Saddam Husayn, Saddam" in .recent times all claimed to be Muslim while waging war against Islam

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Editor's Note: Likewise, in Islam, God judges people according to their intentions: "Allah [۸] will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts; and He is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing" (۲: ۲۲۵). While there are certain beliefs that lead to disbelief--for example, believing that the haram is halal or the halal is haram-.-this does not apply to those who do so out of ignorance

Editor's Note: Saint Augustine of Hippo (۳۵۴-۴۳۰) is known as the African Latin Church [۹] Father. He converted to Christianity through the influence of his mother, St. Monica. His speculation on freedom, history, time and the nature of man give him a prominent place in the history of philosophy. The profundity of his thought was such that both Catholics and Protestants look to him (esp. to his treatise on grace) for doctrinal authority. His De civitate Dei (۴۱۳-۲۶) has been the basis of much political theory. He sought to reconcile .Platonic thought and Christian dogma, reason and faith

Author's Note: For example, the Spanish Arabist D. Cabanelas, professor at the [۱۰] Universidad de Granada, believes that the label "sect" "must only be applied to those groups who are opposed to consensus on fundamental issues, who separate themselves from the orthodox Sunnah and form a dissident community... The faithful followers of 'Ali, on the other hand, were given the name of Shi'ites, openly dividing themselves into various sects, some of a markedly extremist character." D. Cabanelas, "No hay más Dios que Allah," apud J. Samso, J. Vernet, D. Cabanelas and J. Vallve, Así nació el Islam (Madrid .۱۹۸۶) fasc ۲, ۲۳

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Editor's Note: This equally applies to some orientalists who take interest in Islam in [۱۱] .general

Editor's Note: As Fyzee explains, "earlier orientalists believed that Shi'ism was a [۱۲] pernicious corruption of Islam, concocted mainly, if not solely, for political reasons. Also .(that the Sunni faith is the 'orthodox' faith and the Shi'ite, the 'heterodox' one" (۳

Editor's Note: The general acceptance of Sunni views over "heterodox" Shi'ite views [۱۳] by orientalists demonstrates "[t]he profound Sunni bias of Western scholarship on Islam" .which Richard W. Bulliet observes

CHAPTER ۳

AL–IJMA' OR SCHOLARLY CONSENSUS

:Al–ijma' or Scholarly Consensus

?An Accepted Method for Controlling Heresy

Orientalists who follow the Christianizing interpretation of Islamic thought have attempted to present the doctrine of ijma' as an accepted means of controlling "heresy" in Islam.[۱] According to Gibb, the doctrine of ijma' can be viewed from the perspective of .Christian orthodoxy and can be likened to the case of the council

Despite their external differences, a certain analogy can be made between the concept of "consensus" of the Christian Church and the Islamic concept of ijma'. In some cases the results of both procedures were quite similar. For example, it was only after ijma' was acknowledged as a source of law and doctrine that a definitive proof of "heresy" became possible. Any attempt to interpret the Scripture in a way that negated the validity of a given and accepted solution was by consensus, a bid'ah, an act of "innovation" and .("heresy" (Gibb ۹۰

Gibb's main thesis is that the concept of "council" in Islam forms part of a secular organism that mends Islamic doctrine. It does so in light of a sovereign authority, thus fulfilling the work of purging and purifying matters of faith that can be assimilated into the work of ecclesiastic canonists. He understands the concept of "council" as a juristic entity, like a council of bishops. In order to protect the theological doctrine of the "Church," the

Islamic Caliphate relied upon the doctrine of ijma‘ as the basis for the orthodox refutation .of “heretical” Shi‘ite ideas

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When Gibb speaks of ijma‘ in terms of councils or ecclesiastic consensus, the distinguished Orientalist maintains himself firmly within the Christianizing interpretation of Islam. The word “council” is derived from the Latin concilium which comes from cum, “with,” and calare, “to call” and “to proclaim,” hence the sense of convocation and assembly. The word “council” is a Latin term which defines, much like the Greek root of Church [lit. ekklesia, from ek and kalo] a flock or congregation of faithful Christians under the guidance and direction of their pastors. It applies to a group of individuals with the same character in a double sense: active like convocation of bishops and passive like a congregation of the same in an organization, a society or a collegial body. Viewing the doctrine of ijma‘ through the Christian concept of council presupposes the existence of an orthodox “Church” in Islam which, like the Christian Church, can be recognized and differentiated from other “sects” or “heresies,” and as a juridical, hierarchical, sovereign, .visible, empirical, and easily perceived institution for all to see

Gibb’s ecclesiastic conception of Islamic consensus is misguided and even false. It fails to appreciate that in Islam both elements are identical: the doctrine of ijma‘ as a source of law and canon of the Scriptures, on the one hand, and Islamic orthodoxy, both internal and external, on the other. Both of them co-exist and coincide in the application of the shari‘ah and the sunnah of the Prophet as sovereign expressions of the Qur’an in both .Sunni and Shi‘ite Islam

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Let us now turn from a general critique to some more specific observations. It must be noted that Gibb's Christianizing conception traces back to the ۱۹۵۰s, a period when the type of distinction we are discussing was not viewed with the same importance as it is currently. Hence, the absence of a broader and more elaborate perspective is fully justified. Many of the problems we are discussing here, such as the question of "sects," .had barely even been posed

What we would have liked to observe, among the Orientalists who followed the same Christianizing line as Gibb, is a degree of academic, analytical and philosophical evolution. Above all, we would have liked them, starting with Gibb, the Orientalist from Oxford, to come to a better understanding of the questions raised by the study of Shi'ite Islam. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Besides a handful of honorable exceptions, the majority of research published in the West during the last decade of the fifties and even well beyond consists of nothing more than worthless compilations whose theoretical weakness is in sad contrast to the solid scientific work done by Orientalists in the past.[۲] .These solid scholars include Reynold A

Nicholson, Louis Massignon, Jacques Berque, Miguel Asín Palacios, Miguel" and, why not, even Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb, H.A.R." . Despite their incomprehension of the Islamic spirit, they practiced and professed a science which was more consistent with their intellectual qualifications. Their work is less suspicious of compromise with ideological controversy which reduces religious polemics, in all of its shades, into terms of extreme triviality and doubtful scientific integrity. It is the ancient affliction that appears to worsen in the West, especially in recent times, in which a host of "opinion-makers," turned into "specialists" of Islam, have come forth like black heralds repeatedly croaking [the same mistakes ad nauseam.[۳

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Without doubt, the knowledge and analogical application of these theological principles must have seemed very convenient to Gibb in his work of comparing the Islamic concept of ijma' as a consensus of scholars with that of the Christian council as a consensus of ecclesiastics. This is even more evident when Gibb alludes to the role of analogy in his comparison and confesses that such a comparison is possible despite the external differences of the Christian councils. This is absolutely false. Regardless of such esoteric formulaic divergences, there is no Church in Islam. Furthermore, there is no organized clergy in Islam in the ecclesiastic sense of the priesthood because Islam does not accept the mediation between God and man. In Islam, there does not exist a religious establishment lead by a Pope with a hierarchy of bishops, cardinals and priests, all ranked according to their level of merit and the closeness to the central power of the Church. We must not forget that any attempt to look for examples of consensus in Islam comparable to the Christian councils of Nicea, Lyon, Letran, Trent and the Vatican would be useless.[۴]

In the entire history of Islam, there has never been a case in which qualified scholars and jurists gathered in diverse synods to examine a doctrine that they considered erroneous and who then related their conclusions in letters to a prelate in which they asked for this error to be condemned as a heresy by the entire Islamic community. There were many times, however, when Caliphs or mujtahidun reacted on the basis of arbitrary and erroneous decisions of incompetent authorities, ignorant of the very basis of the discussed doctrine. We are not claiming that "heretical" doctrines or misunderstood minorities have never been challenged, refuted, condemned and persecuted in Islam because the facts speak for themselves.[۵]

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We have the examples of martyrs for whoever would categorically deny any affirmation to the contrary. These include al-Hallaj, Suhrawardi, Uways al-Qarni, Qanbar, Maytham al-Tammar and, among the followers of ‘Ali, the very Imams, of which the most tragic case was that of al-Husayn, sayyid al-shuhada’ [the Lord of Martyrs].[۶] Is it not clear that all of these deaths were the consequence of emphatic and arbitrary decisions? In any event, we have made no attempts to deny or to justify the persecution of those who were accused or suspected of heresy as this goes beyond the scope of this study.[۷] On the contrary, our goal here has been to demonstrate that the concept of consensus as a type of council is an erroneous misrepresentation of the function of ijma‘ in Islam. In the Muslim tradition, the concept of consensus does not express an accepted mode of controlling heresy or the unanimous authority of all the scholars of the Islamic [community.[٨

We understand perfectly well that Gibb’s goal is to present the concept of ijma‘ in socio-religious terms that are more readily understandable in the West, by linking it to the Christian concept of consensus. In our opinion, however, such simplifications do nothing other than complicate any attempt to penetrate Islamic thought, particularly when it is done by examples that are as divergent as they are foreign to the Islamic faith. When we say that concepts such as “councils” are foreign we do not mean to imply that Islam is somehow backwards or less up to date as religious institutions in the West, particularly it .terms of its formal religious expressions

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According to the generally accepted etymology given by Arabic linguists, the technical term ijma‘ comes from the Arabic root jama‘a. It has several definitions, each of which relates to the concept of agreement, the first of which is “consensus.” Hence, there can be no doubt as to the concept the word expresses. Both the Arabic word ijma‘ and the Latin word consensus convey the idea of being free from coercion, being able to distance oneself from that which is oppressive and limits the freedom of choice. The mujtahidun [lit: “those who make an effort” in the personal interpretation of the law] define ijma‘ as “point of view” and, in such a sense, it is closer to the Vedic concept of darsana than the Christian concept of council. In effect, ijma‘ as a source of law and doctrine, does not present contradictory concepts, but rather different points of view and differing aspects [of the same many sided concept.[٩

The doctrine of ijma‘ is obviously found in both the Sunni and Shi‘ite traditions. However, both of these orthodox tendencies interpret and apply it differently. It is universally agreed that what has more weight in Islamic law is the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and the companions of the Prophet, those who lived alongside him, were chosen by him, and who heard his sayings directly. This is followed by the followers [tabi‘un] of the companions and, finally, the followers of the followers, those who received from their masters what .their masters had received from their masters

With the disappearance of this last generation, for the majority of Islamic schools of jurisprudence the consensus now rests with the mujtahidun, whose edicts [fatawa] vary in accord with their philosophical postures. If Sunni Islam declared that the door of ijtihad [personal deduction of the law] was closed in the ١٠th century [we know that some Sunni ‘ulama’ have now reopened the door], Shi‘ite Islam, on the other hand, never recognized this closure.[١٠] Shi‘ite jurists and theologians, known as mujtahidun, have always defended this right. Although enlightened individuals and scholars can appreciate the inner meanings of the sacred law in all of its dimensions, none can any longer claim perfection and infallibility. Since scholars, regardless of their erudition, are human, their understanding of the law can only be imperfect.[١١] Hence, they must allow themselves to be guided by the consensus of the sunnah of the Prophet and the authorized [interpretations of the Holy Imams.[١٢

In conclusion, it is wise to recall that the fundamentals of faith and principles upon which the Muslim faith is based are irrefragable. Complete faith requires complete acceptance of tenets which are not and cannot be the work of men or the result of human consensus.[۱۳] God is the Sole Sovereign and the Final Source of Legitimate Authority.[۱۴] The essence of His law is immutable truth. His law is more immutable than the process of .human thought for it is eternal and never changes

Footnote

Author's Note: Concerning ijma', see G. Hourani, "The Basis of Authority and consensus [۱] in Sunnite Islam" in Studia Islamica XXI (۱۹۶۴), ۱۳-۶۰; for ijtihad, see M.I. Jannati, "The Beginnings of Shi'ite ijtihad" in Tawhid (۱۹۸۸), VI, I, ۴۵-۶۴; in relation with Islamic jurisprudence and for a comparison between the different points of view of different schools see, A.R.I. Doi, Shari'ah: The Islamic Law (London ۱۹۸۴), ۳۱۵; S.H. Nasr, Ideals and .Realities of Islam (London ۱۹۶۶) IV

Editor's Note: As we explain in "El idioma árabe en proceso de convertirse en un arma [۲] contra el Islam," "No cabe duda alguna que los orientalistas norteamericanos de hoy no son comparables a los orientalistas franceses e ingleses de la época colonial" [There is no doubt that the American orientalists of today cannot be compared to the French and .[English orientalists from colonial times

Editor's Note: Ahmad Ghorab's Book, Subverting Islam, is a valuable read as it exposes [۳] Saudi supported schools and scholars. The leading pseudo-specialists on Islam include .the neoconservative Daniel Pipes who is viewed by many as Islamophobic

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Editor's Note: The Council of Nice a was the first ecumenical council convened (۳۲۵) by [۴] Constantine I to condemn Arianism. Lyon was the place of two councils (۱۲۴۵-۱۲۷۴) while Letran was the place of five. The Council of Trent took place in Trent, from ۱۵۴۵ to ۱۵۴۷, in Bologna from ۱۵۴۷ to ۱۵۴۹ and once again in Trent from ۱۵۵۱ to ۱۵۵۲ and ۱۵۶۳ to ۱۵۶۳. It was convoked by Pople Paul III and concluded by Pious IV. It was the keystone of the Counterreformation by which the Roman Church opposed the Protestants, revised their .disciplines and reaffirmed their dogmas. For the Vatican Council, see note ۸۷

Editor's Note: It cannot be denied that there have been cases of persecution in Islam. [۵] To cite a single example, Sultan Selim I, the Cruel, exterminated ۴۰,۰۰۰ of his Shi'ite subjects for political reasons. As for the main madhahib in Islam, they were imposed by various authorities on their subjects. For more on the spread of the Sunni schools, see the chapter "[The] Secret Behind the Spread of [the] Sunni Schools" in Tijani's The Shi'ah: The Real Followers of the Sunnah: ۸۲-۸۷. Although Tijani conveniently fails to mention it, this applies equally to the Ja'fari school of thought in Persia which was imposed as a state-religion, for political reasons, by the Safavids. Without the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam, Twelver Shi'ites did not have a physical candidate for the leadership of the Muslim Community. Hence, they posed no immediate threat to the authorities at a time where .multiple movements were vying for power and leadership

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Editor’s Note: Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj was a theologian, mystic [۶] and Muslim martyr whose work marked the beginning of a strong Sufi current. Accused of claiming divinity for having stated ana al-Haqq (I am the Truth), he was executed by the Abbasids. The rigorist literalists who judged him could not see beyond the surface of his words. Al-Hallaj was not claiming to be Allah. He was stating that he had submitted to Allah and had become at one with Him. As Annemarie Schimmel explains, “in rare moments of ecstasy the uncreated spirit may be united with the created human spirit, and the mystic then becomes the living personal witness of Allah and may declare ana al-Haqq” (۷۲). The legitimate theological basis for such an understanding is demonstrated in :the following hadith qudsi where the Messenger of Allah says that Allah said

Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I (hate hurting him.’ (Bukhari

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Rather than claiming that he was God, al-Hallaj was expressing that he had lost his "I"--his selfhood--and had been submerged in the Beloved. Rumi believed that the words "I am God" and I am creative truth" meant "I am pure" and "I hold nothing within me except Him" (Arasteh ۸۹). Rumi contrasted this interpretation with "orthodox" believers who claim, "I am a servant of God," which asserts the dualism of existence (۸۹).

The Messenger of Allah and the Holy Imams are also the Supreme Names of Allah for it has been said by Imam al-Sadiq: "We are the Most Beautiful Names" (Khumayni Islamic Revolution ۴۱۱). The ahl al-bayt are manifestations of Allah. As such, the divine names are applicable to them, despite the fact that they themselves are not divine. As Khumayni observes, "The whole world is a name of Allah, for a name is a sign, and all the creatures that exist in the world are signs of the Sacred Essence of Allah Almighty" (۳۶۷); "Everything is a name of Allah; conversely, the names of Allah are everything, and they are effaced within His being" (۳۷۰).

Suhrawardi (c. ۱۱۵۵-Alepo ۱۱۹۱) was a philosopher and mystic. He integrated the Gnostic tradition, hermeticism and neo-Platonism into Islam and exerted a great influence. Uways al-Qarni was a follower of 'Ali who died fighting for him. Qanbar was a retainer of 'Ali. Maytham al-Tammar was a freedman of 'Ali and a loyal Shi'ite. He was executed by Ibn Ziyyad in Kufa. For a detailed description of the Imams, consult Mufid's Kitab al-irshad.

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As for the Shi'ite Imams, the majority opinion, with the notable exception of Shaykh al-Mufid, is that all of them were martyred through poisoning with the exception of Imam 'Ali who was killed by the blow of a sword while conducting prayers and Imam Husayn in a .heroic battle at Karbala

Editor's Note: The author wishes to make it explicitly clear that he is not justifying or [٧] defending the actions of any individuals. Al-Hallaj's words may seem excessive to some, but so was the punishment inflicted upon him by the authorities. When the author describes al-Hallaj as a "martyr" he does so in the sense found in the dictionary: "someone who suffers death rather than renounce his faith // someone who suffers greatly for some cause or principle" and not in the strict Islamic sense of the word shahid, which means a Muslim who has died defending his din [religion], who struggled in the path of Allah, and who is assured of immediate and eternal reward in Paradise. In the case of .Hallaj, Allah is the Judge and Allah is the Just

Editor's Note: This is in contrast to Nasr's view that heterodoxy can be judged by the [٨] consensus or ijma'of the mainstream community on the basis of the Qur'an and the .(Sunnah (Heart of Islam ٨٧

Editor's Note: In Islamic jurisprudence, one can find a variety of opinions on different [٩] issues, each suited to the variety of individuals and levels found in society.While there may be a myriad of multicolored leaves on the tree of Islam, they all contrast and complement one another to create the Muslim mosaic. Truly, there is a great blessing in .differences and diversity

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Editor's Note: Among the Sunnis, the doors of ijtihad, the independent interpretation [۱۰] and application of Islamic law to changing times and circumstances, was closed in the ۱۰th century. As a result, many Sunni Muslims are obliged to follow Islamic law as understood by medieval scholars which comes into conflict with their ability to manage with modernity. See my "Like Sheep without a Shepherd: The Lack of Leadership in Sunni Islam." The reopening of the doors of ijtihad was done by Muhammad 'Abduh, leader of the Salafi movement which can be defined as "Wahhabism with ijtihad." Their ijtihad, however, is not the interpretation of the shari'ah to apply it to modern times but rather .subjecting modernity to misinterpreted medieval mandates

Editor's Note: A fact which must be remembered when following the fatawa of any [۱۱] scholar. In some cases, what they are presenting are educated points of view which is why they often finish their fatawa with the words wa Allahu a'lam or "And Allah knows best." They are not necessarily absolute facts. On many issues, there is not just one ruling: there are many, each of which is based on a thorough understanding of the Islamic sciences. It is a must for Muslims to adopt this tolerant atttidude of mutual respect and comprehension. Imam Khumayni, who was perhaps the greatest Islamic scholar of the ۲۰th century, firmly adopted this humble attitude. In both his commentary of the Qur'an, and other contingent domains, he reiterated that "what I have to say is based on possibility, not certainty" (Islam and Revolution ۳۶۶). And this is precesily what differentiates Muslims from the ahl al-bayt. While we may have knowledge, the ahl al-'ismah have knowledge of certainty.

:Editor's Note: As Imam Muhammad al-Baqir explains [١٢]

He who has given verdicts [in matters of religion] on the basis of his own opinion, has actually followed a religion which he himself does not know. And he who accepts his religion in such a matter, has actually contradicted Allah, since he has declared something (lawful and something unlawful without knowing it. (Kulayni ١۵٢: hadith ١٧۵

And as the Prophet Muhammad has said: "He who interprets the Qur'an from his own .(personal opinion will have a seat in hell" (Tirmidhi, Ghazali

Editor's Note: Shi'ite Islam places a great deal of importance on 'aql or reasoning. [١٣] While Shi'ite Muslims must follow experts in matters of law, they are prohibited from following anyone in matters of faith without proof and conviction. As Imam Khumayni explains, "A Muslim must accept the fundamental principles of Islam with reason and faith and must not follow anyone in this respect without proof and conviction" (The Practical .(Laws of Islam ١٧

Editor's Note: The author is alluding to the following verse "to Allah belongs all power" [١۴] .(٢:١۶۵), among others

CHAPTER ۴

THE INFALLIBLE DIVINE AUTHORITY

:The Infallible Divine Authority

'Source of Law and Doctrine in Islamic ijma

In the preceding pages, we have addressed the issue of ijma'. We have seen that, on the one hand, the Islamic concept of consensus is interpreted as an intellectual acceptance of divine truth and, on the other hand, as an expression of trust in God and the Prophet. We have also noted that, to a certain degree, the Islamic concept of consensus requires the acceptance of educated opinions acquired through a thorough study of Islamic law and through the intellectual effort known as ijtihad. It is thus the obligation of every observant Muslim to place his trust in the wisdom of others.[١] The entire structure of Islamic society is based on this trust in the rulings of scholars since, for all intents and purposes, the acceptance of these religious rulings constitutes an acceptance without reservation of

.revealed law

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The concept of ijma‘ as a source of law and doctrine implies, in an objective sense, the acceptance of a body of divinely revealed laws which must be accepted in their entirety as a manifestation of the acceptance of the sovereign authority of God. In a subjective sense, embracing divine authority represents the sanctifying flux [barakah] instilled by God in the human soul through the bounty bestowed upon the Prophet. Such submission is never blind and unconditional. Blind following is unacceptable when the motives that are expounded are not sufficiently convincing or do not coincide with the inner meanings of the revelation.[۲] If, as we have said, some Islamic tenets, mandates or principles must be accepted completely, totally and wholeheartedly, it is because they are directly ordained by the revelation, which is free of errors,[۳] and because they are based on the authority of the Prophet and the Imams.

In Islam, in order for a norm or dictate to be accepted, it must be firmly based on God's revelation and the sunnah of his Prophet.[۴] In such cases, transcendental and ineffable reality becomes evident as soon as reason elevates itself beyond the sphere of sensible truth and attains the level of intelligent truth. It is for this reason that it is the obligation of every Muslim to refrain from submission to a dictate until he is convinced with certainty that what he is accepting is legitimate and in complete accord with revealed truth.[۵] This is the teaching of Shi‘ism as taught during the time of the Prophet and further developed on the authority of the Imams as part of their prophetic supplement.

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Regardless of their efforts and actions, ordinary human beings do deserve the rank of absolute authority over others. Even the greatest of human efforts cannot be compared to the divine gift of prophecy and the grace of wilayah. The authority of the Prophet was the result of revelation. The Prophet passed his supreme status and the mandate of his mission, the spread of revealed truth, to his cousin and son-in-law Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. This divine authority was passed on to his descendants and successors who are the definitive authorities of Islam whose obligation is to amplify it and actualize it. The human efforts of the Imams would be of little or no benefit were it not for the fact that their external words and actions were accompanied by the rays of light which flow within them, the Muhammadan truth [al-haqiqah al-muhammadiyyah], the gnostic or esoteric reality, the divine presence in their hearts which are the true depositories of eternal wisdom. It is for this reason that they receive the titles of "legatees" and "executors" of the revelation. As can be appreciated in light of the above, ijma' is an intellectual assent of .divinely revealed truth, assent which does not exclude trust

Whenever infallible divine authority is absent, human life loses its direction and ceases to be oriented towards God as a final destination. Although God calls all human beings to obedience and the straight path, not all are reached. And not all of those who are reached by His call respond to it, because not all are chosen, obey and submit to His authority.[۶] The Prophet and the Imams are the most obedient and submissive to God's authority. This is because they are the Chosen Ones, the purest souls on earth. They are epiphanies [madhar, lit. "appearance" or "manifestation"], theophanies [tajalliyat, lit. "illuminations" or "revelations"] and signs [ayat] of the infallible divine authority. Such authority cannot be .claimed by just anyone

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Rather, it must be considered as a gift or grace from God. When ʻAli, the depository and inheritor of the infallible divine authority and the Vicar of God, was preparing himself to enter the scene of Islamic life, not even the opposition and collusion of the followers of Abu Bakr could impede this apparition which was announced by the Prophet prior to his death and awaited by his family and closest companions. ʻAli struggled tirelessly against them and became their most dreaded enemy.[٧] He always upheld his right to the succession and debunked all of the arguments used against his legitimate aspirations. But .we are getting ahead of ourselves

From the opposition and collusion of the followers of Abu Bakr, to the resistance and reaction of ʻAli and his followers, the historical development of the Caliphate revolved around the issue of the succession of the Prophet. They involved one another and illuminated one another. In light of authentic and trustworthy sources, the situation becomes clear and enables us to see that the historical emergence of Shiʻism was based on metaphysical and cosmological principles, even though the chain of secular conflicts have externally emphasized the political side. This leads us to the fundamental issue which interests us most: the concept that Shiʻite Islam was a divinely ordained development destined to convert itself into an invisible axis and visible hinge of the entire prophetic wilayah. In order to understand this, it is necessary to examine its exoteric .reality on the inside, starting with its esoteric and Gnostic interior

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Footnote

Editor's Note: Shi'ite scholars are unanimous regarding the obligation of taqlid. As [١] Imam Khumayni explains, "If one is not a mujtahid and does not have confidence in oneself, then he must follow a particular mujtahid and act according to his rulings" (The .(Practical Laws of Islam ١٧

Editor's Note: As Imam Ali explains in al-Kafi, if one has to chose between intellect, [٢] chastity and faith, one should chose intellect as intellect leads to faith (qtd. In al-Haiat: La vida, vol ١., ٢٣: hadith ٢٢). He also explains that "The intellect is the messenger of truth" and "The foundation of all things is the intellect" (٢١, hadith ١١, ١٢). And as Imam al-Sadiq has said in al-Kafi, "The intelligence is that through which man worships the All-Merciful and gains Paradise" and "He who possesses intelligence possesses religion, and he who .(possesses religion enters the Garden" (qtd. in Tabataba'i A Shi'ite Anthology ۵۵

Editor's Note: According to Almighty Allah, the Qur'an is safeguarded: "We have, [٣] without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (١۵: ٩). According to Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid Muhsin Hakim Tabataba'i, "The opinion of all the Elders and the Scholars of all the Muslims from the beginning of Islam till now, is that the arrangement of the verses and the chapters are the same, as it is in our hands. Our Elders did not believe in tahrif [textual change]" (Ahmad 'Ali, The Holy Qur'an ۵٩a). Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid Abu'l Qasim al-Khu'i has ruled that "Any talk about tahrif [textual change] of any kind in the Holy Qur'an is only superstitious. No disarrangement of any kind has taken place in the Holy Qur'an (۶١a). And, according to Ayatullah al-'Uzma Sayyid Hadi al-Husayni al-Milani, "Neither any disagreement nor any shortage nor addition of any kind whatsoever has taken place in the Qur'an. The discussion and arguments about tahrif [textual change], etc., are all false and unfounded. This is an Everlasting Miracle of the Holy Prophet. The Lord Himself has made incumbent on Himself its collection, recital and explanation and has said that He Himself will be its Guard. It has also been challenged that falsehood shall approach it neither from front or from behind. And Shaykh Sadduq has said 'Verily it is our belief that the Qur'an which God sent down to His Prophet Muhammad is what is between the two covers and that which is in the hands of the people, and nothing more than that... And he also said that anyone who attributes unto us that we [the Shi'ah] say that it is more than that, he is a liar" (۶٣a). Ayatullah Milani

concludes concisely that "The Holy Qur'an is divinely protected. There is no tahrif [textual change] of any kind in it."

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Editor's Note: As Imam al-Sadiq has said, "Nothing exists but it has been described in [۴] the Book [of Allah, al-Qur'an] and the Sunnah" (Kulayni ١:١:٢, ١۵٧: hadith ١٨۴,). Imam al-Kazim has said: "Certainly, the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet contain each .(and every thing" (١۶١: hadith ١٩٠

Editor's Note: The author is alluding to the Qur'anic verses: "Produce your proof if ye [۵] .(are truthful" (٢:١١١); "Bring your convincing proof (٢١:٢۴); and "Produce your proof" (٢٨:٧۵

Editor's Note: The Shi'ite position regarding predestination and free choice is a middle [۶] :one. As Martyr Murtada Mutahari explains

F]ree will and freedom in Shi'ism occupy an intermediate position between the Ash'arite] [absolute] predestination [jabr] and the Mu'tazilite doctrine of freedom [tafwid]. This is the meaning of the famous dictum of the Infallible Imams: la jabra wa la tafwida bal amrun bayna amrayn: Neither jabr nor tafwid; but something intermediate between the two ([extreme] alternatives. (Mutahari ١٩٨۵

Editor's Note: This is in sharp contrast to Nasr's claim that 'Ali did not oppose the first [٧] two Caliphs (Heart of Islam ۶۶), a view held by

many notable Shi'ite scholars, including 'Allamah al-Hilli, and supported by historical ":anecdotes. As we explain in "Strategic Compromise in Islam

When Imam'Ali's Caliphate was usurped on three occasions, he did not respond with the sword, but with silence and patience. The Imam understood that a civil war in the early days of the Islamic movement, when Muslims were surrounded by hostile enemies on all fronts, could very well lead to the annihilation of Islam. His weapons were taqiyyah [pious dissimulation] and withdrawal from public affairs. As a result of these actions, many Muslims became keenly aware that there was something seriously wrong with the system. The Imam's apparent inaction was in fact the wisest and most effective of action through which he called into question the legitimacy and undermined the authority of the .opportunistic rulers

While 'Ali's did provide advice and guidance when called upon, his behaviour was consistent with that of an opposition leader. Nasr's attitude is similar to that of Sachedina's who claims that 'Ali's appointment as Imam and Caliph was implicit and not explicit ("Islam" ۱۲۸۹; Rizvi Chapter ۴). As Rizvi observes, "This dichotomy between 'the academician' and 'the believer' is indeed disturbing (Chapter ۱).

CHAPTER ۵

MUKHTAR AL-THAQIFI

Mukhtar al-Thaqifi

The Enlightened Messianic Activist:

The Shi'ite Insurrection as Political Reaction, Reparation and Revenge

In order to explain the transformation that Islam went through since the rise of Shi'ism, Muslim and non-Muslim historians point to two factors derived from the same cause: the political struggle for the Caliphate. The first factor was that the political influence of the oligarchy transformed itself into a timocratic power, a state in which political power increases with the amount of property one owns, through the support of the triumphant majority. The second factor was that the political will of a marginalized minority became a medium of resistance. Depending on the personal inclinations of previous researchers, they argue in favor of one of these two factors. For us, both factors are two aspects of the same cause. For Western research scholars, it is not always easy to get used to the idea that in Islam, the relationship between the religion and politics is much closer than it is in the West between the Church and the State. It is even more difficult for them to accept that in Shi'ism religion and politics are two aspects of the orthodox development of the same doctrine, rather than parallel or separate tendencies that revolve around the same sphere but without any effective connection between them.

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Recent studies," says Bausani, "distinguish more between a political Shi'ism, which" included the purely political partisans of 'Ali and his family..., a religious Shi'ism, which included activists impregnated with Gnostic ideas, who were based mostly in Kufa, in Mesopotamia, and whose main representative ... was the politico-religious agitator al-Mukhtar who took over Kufah in ۶۸۵-۶۸۶. He preached Messianic doctrines and started "some very interesting customs like the cult of the vacant throne and so forth

As a result of these events, some Orientalists attempted to establish a clear .(۱۱۲-۱۱۳) distinction between an "extremist" political Shi'ism, a "moderate" religious Shi'ism and an "intermediate" Shi'ism. This latter, which shares both political and religious aspects, is at times "extremist" and at others "moderate" according to Bausani's definition of Twelver Shi'ism. It comes as no surprise that, centuries after the birth of Shi'ism, Orientalists seeking support for the "democratic" orientation of Abu Bakr would use this inappropriate [division to supposedly distinguish between a political Shi'ism and a religious Shi'ism.[۱

The origins and early development of Shi'ite Islam is, to a great extent, a history of divisions, dissensions and internal quarrels relating to the problem of succession. A considerable number of movements, some of which went from partial or relative dissidence to outright rupture [fitnah], were drawn into the center of this great storm as a result of the violence of the political and religious authorities. It must be mentioned, however, that while some of these groups may have reached the state of sects [furuq] in the Christian sense of the world, in our view, even this barrier between differences does not produce clear-cut division. On the contrary, under this umbrella, many branches flourished, some longer-lived than others, which developed alongside Shi'ism without breaking the tie, as weak as it may have been, with the Islamic trunk from which they [were born.[۲

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In truth, the development of sects, that is, groups which diverge on the basis of important beliefs or practices, is the result of the closer ties established between Shi'ism and the surrounding esoteric traditions. The divergence and conflict between the distinct groups is related to the reaction towards an ocean of doctrinal wealth. The Isma'iliyyah,[٣] for example, have a doctrine which, in many respects, makes them the inheritors of the Sabaean tradition of Harran which, as is known, was the depository of the Hermetic and neo-Pythagorean doctrines, which were combined with elements from Hindu occultism and Gnosis.[۴] These Sabaeans must not be confused with the Sabaeans or Mandaeans [from southern of Irak and Persia.[۵

One of the common mistakes made in relation to Shi'ah Islam is the attempt to compare it with the various schisms found in Christianity. Shi'ism is often portrayed as a schismatic coextension of dissident groups organized in small cells or brotherhoods driven by an uncompromising parochial spirit. The concept of inshi'ab [division] in the Islamic religion must not be confused with that of fitnah, definitive division and irreparable rupture. In fact, Shi'ism suffered no "division" [inshi'ab] or rupture [fitnah] during the Imamate of the .first three Imams: 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn

After the death of Husayn, however, the majority of Shi'ites placed their trust in 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-'abidin,[۶] while a minority, known as al-Kaysaniyyah, believed that the right to succession belonged to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah. He was the third son of 'Ali, but not through Fatimah. As a result, he cannot be considered a descendant of the Prophet.[٧] Despite this fact, Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah was proclaimed by his partisans as the Fourth Imam and the promised Mahdi. During the time he sought refuge in the mountains of Rawdah which form a cordillera in Madinah, Mukhtar al-Thaqifi served as ".his "representative

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It was believed that Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah would come down one day and appear as the Rightly-Guided and Long-Awaited Messiah. In accordance with Shi‘ite thought, the Mahdi is a man motivated by God who is also a military chief and a warrior. Even if the followers of Mukhtar al-Thaqifi gave an extremist character to the eschatological idea of the Hidden Imam, the Islamic figure of the Messiah as restorer of revealed religion is not an invention of Mukhtar or a Christian influence. The Mahdi is a spiritual synthesis of all revealed forms and not a mere uniform syncretism. It is a concept that is expressed in all its dimensions and depth in many ahadith of the Prophet as well as many traditions of the [Imams.[۸

In synthesis, we can say that after the death of Imam Zayn al-‘abidin, the majority of Shi‘ites accepted Muhammad al-Baqir as the Fifth Imam, despite the fact that a minority followed his brother Zayd al-Shahid, who were known from that moment on as Zaydis.[۹] Imam Muhammad al-Baqir was succeeded by his son Ja‘far al-Sadiq the Sixth Imam and, after his death, his son Musa al-Kadim was recognized as the Seventh Imam. Nevertheless, an opposition group insisted that the successor of the Sixth Imam was his elder son Isma‘il who had died when his father was still alive.[۱۰] This group split from the .Shi‘ite majority and became known as the Isma‘ilis

Others, instead, preferred ‘Abdullah al-Aftah and some even chose Muhammad, both sons of the Sixth Imam. Still, there were even those who considered Ja’far al-Sadiq as the Last Imam and were convinced that none would succeed him. Likewise, after the martyrdom of Imam Musa al-Kadim, the majority followed his son ‘Ali al-Rida as the Eighth Imam. But there were those who refused to recognize any Imam after al-Kadim and came to constitute the brotherhood of the Waqifiyyah.[۱۱] From the Eighth to the Twelfth Imam, considered by the Shi‘ite majority as the Awaited Mahdi, no important .division [inshi‘ab] took place within Shi‘ism

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However it occured, what is important to retain here is that, since its origins, Shi'ite Islam represents, more than a spiritual and political rebellion against illegitimate authority, a movement of "awakening," like that of Sufism in the Sunni world. It was not a reformist movement in the Christian sense, like the one that took place in Europe during the ۱۵th and ۱۶th centuries. Shi'ite Islam represents an integral restoration of Muhammadan theosophy and metaphysics through the application and practice of all the teachings of the Holy Imams, who linked the outer meanings of the text to the inner meanings of the .divine word

The root cause for the development of Shi'ism is utterly alien from worldly affairs. The source of Shi'ism is not a simple heresy or a political disagreement. Shi'ite Islam springs from a metaphysical reality, a process of epiphany which establishes a new logophonic manifestation of prophethood. Shi'ism, as the Islam of 'Ali and the ahl al-bayt, is the temporal and earthly pillar of the eternal and celestial reality of the wilayah. The wilayah, the spiritual guidance of the Imams, is a manifestation of prophethood. The wilayah is an inner or occult reality which is found in potential and action within the same prophethood. The wilayah is a manifestation of prophethood that is revealed in a new way. The wilayah is not the renovation of the anterior Qur'anic revelation but its closure. The wilayah is an unveiling of the esoteric and metaphysical truths found in the Qur'an. While the Prophet sealed the age of formal revelation, by means of the divine concession of the wilayah and the Imamate to his descendants, a new age of profound "revelations" was opened.[۱۲] Just as the plerema of the Twelve Imams represents the fullness of the Muhammadan Reality, their teachings and doctrines are flashes from the sole Muhammadan Light, the logophonic effusions and manifestations of the Qur'anic revelation: its perfect synthesis .and exact formulation

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Finally, in order for there to be a living branch from the Islamic trunk, a favorable doctrinal terrain was required, a spiritual identity with its own characteristics which were qualitatively different from the other ideological options of its age. With such an understanding, the historical appearance of Shi'ism seems to be completely inevitable. Without its presence, of course, the history of Islam and the world would have totally changed. In our judgment, any attempt to reduce the historical development of Shi'ism to a mere political problem related to the succession or to some insurgent elements is misguided at best. This applies to figures as fictitious as 'Abdullah ibn Saba, the Yemenite .of Jewish extraction, and as real and historical as Mukhtar al-Thaqifi

Abdullah ibn Saba and Mukhtar al-Thaqifi are presented by Alessandro Bausani as "extremists" [ghulat][۱۳] and precursors of a political Shi'ism. Muslim and non-Muslim specialists have long disputed which one deserves the inappropriate title of "founder of Shi'ite Islam." The Italian Orientalist briefly refers to 'Abdullah ibn Saba as an exalted personality, an ex-Jewish Yemenite who deified 'Ali during his lifetime. The feeble historical foundation surrounding someone considered to be no less than the "founder of Shi'ite Islam" should have led Bausani and other contemporary Orientalists to infer that they were dealing with a fictitious character or an insignificant individual whose existence .had not even been faithfully documented by the annals of time

It is shocking to learn, nonetheless, that the refusal to recognize Shi'ism as a historical and meta-historical reality profoundly rooted since the dawn of Islam has led certain Orientalists to discard the strongest evidence in favor of the weakest. In reality, Abdullah ibn Saba is a literary character, a fabrication of Sayf ibn 'Umar al-Zindiq [the Atheist or Dualist], a famous falsifier of ahadith or prophetic traditions.[۱۴] The absence of any convincing evidence to support the existence of 'Abdullah ibn Saba, partnered with the constantly contradictory and nebulous character of his life convinced some Shi'ite .scholars long ago that they were facing the figure of an imposter

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Despite this body of bona fide doubts, it took longer than expected for this fact to be confirmed. In fact, it took no less than one thousand years before a perspicacious research scholar, the erudite Shi'ite 'Allamah Sayyid Murtada 'Askari, shed light on this somber subject. For many centuries, the detractors of Shi'ism used the tale of 'Abdullah ibn Saba as a pretext to deny its purely Islamic origin and to corrupt its genuine Muhammadan connection. They have stubbornly presented Shi'ism as the creation of an ex-Jew, thence as the political scheme of an upstart Muslim convert. As a result, the figure of the "convert" in the Muslim world continues to be the center around which all suspicions converge, whether reasonable or groundless.[۱۵]

Along with 'Abdullah ibn Saba, Mukhtar al-Thaqifi is often cited as one of the persons directly responsible for the creation of Shi'ism. He appeared as the inspiration for an armed resistance that took place in the year ۴۰ of the Hijrah, during the regime of Mu'awiyyah. The revolutionary movement was directed against the Caliph and the powerful governors of the Ummayad clan who were all considered, without exception, as preachers of moral perdition and religious innovation. During the period of the first three khulafa' al-rashidun [Rightly-Guided Caliphs]--Abu Bakr, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and 'Uthman --, between the years ۶۳۲ and ۶۵۶, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and his followers were subjected to a considerable degree of political coercion which relaxed temporarily when 'Ali acceded to the Caliphate. After the death of 'Ali, however, the persecution of the Shi'ites became increasingly intense and intolerable under the Ummayad regime.[۱۶]

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With the proclamation of Mu‘awiyyah as the Caliph in Jerusalem in the year ۶۶۰, the Caliphate was moved to Damascus and acquired an entirely different character than the one it possessed during the rule of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs.[۱۷] The defining characteristics of Mu‘awiyyah rule were nepotism and tyranny. The Caliph turned into a “king” [malik] who governed as an absolute sovereign in the manner of the Persian and Byzantine emperors.[۱۸] With the death of Mu‘awiyyah, he was succeeded by his son Yazi [۶۸۰-۶۸۳], described by historians as a degenerate drunkard.[۱۹] Successive uprisings against him broke out through all of Arabia, inspired and encouraged by the Shi‘ites who despised the moral and spiritual decadence of the Ummayads. The Shi‘ite revolts .multiplied throughout the Ummayad Caliphate

The political reaction and righteous revenge for the death of Husayn, the youngest son of ‘Ali and Fatimah, occurred in Karbala during the reign of Yazid. The revolution was led on behalf of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, whom we have already mentioned, and its goal was accomplished by Mukhtar al-Thaqifi of Kufa in the year ۶۸۵. It was in Kufa, one of the holiest cities in Islam, that the various esoteric and political branches of Shi‘ism appeared. Fond of the old Christianizing formula of the Orientalists, Hitti affirms that “the blood of [Husayn, and the blood of his father, was the seed of the Shi‘ite Church.”[۲۰

The unequal efforts of the distinct Shi‘ite groups against the Ummayad regime, each distinct in nature, meaning, purpose and reach, definitively did nothing but lead the insurgents to disaster, to merciless, heartless and relentless repression and to brutal martyrdom. But, despite these vagaries, they are not movements undeserving of attention. They have their place, which is not at all negligible, in the course of the historical evolution of the Shi‘ism we attempt to trace. In short, Mukhtar al-Thaqifi lived in a period of difficult transition in the history of Shi‘ism. As we have mentioned, it was to a great extent a time of violent dissent and disputes. Bribery and political crimes were routinely used by the Ummayad regime to suppress its opponents. As a result, the division of Shi‘ite Islam into distinct parties or factions, each one following ‘Ali and some of his descendants, became an instrument of political struggle and the sole means of liberation .and hope for the oppressed

It was then, during those dark days of despotism, that Mukhtar al-Thaqifi appeared on the scene, transforming himself into one of the most active combatants and one of the most outstanding and ingenious revolutionaries of his time. It goes without saying that Mukhtar al-Thaqifi was Shi'ite, and probably forcibly so. In the religious and social framework of his time, he was also a messianic revolutionary, illuminated by Gnostic ideas. In line with the goals and aspirations of his political program, he accomplished his mission to kill 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyyad and, in so doing, he avenged the death of the Third Imam, Husayn al-Sibt al-Asghar, the youngest grandson of the Prophet. The personality and character of Mukhtar al-Thaqifi aroused a great deal of controversy in the early history of Shi'ite Islam. Some sources present him as an ambitious adventurer and a faithful follower of the political authority of ahl al-bayt.

For others, he was an enlightened being who was almost raised to the rank of a prophet by his contemporaries. Although he never made such a claim himself, he did indicate directly and indirectly, as we will see shortly, that his actions were inspired by the angel of revelation. After overcoming some initial hurdles, Mukhtar's personal success was great and long-lasting. He finished his days with praise and acclaim, recognized as one of the bravest heroes and one of the most efficient military leaders of Shi'ism. He was the implacable avenger of Husayn, the standard of the tawwabun [penitents] who consolidated the aspirations of this revolutionary Shi'ite movement whose appearance was motivated by the tragedy of Karbala.[۲۱] The tawwabun or penitents constituted the first avenging movement of Karbala. However, as soon as Mukhtar al-Thaqifi appeared on the scene, the tawwabun were assimilated, and perhaps rightfully so, into his brand of revolutionary messianism.

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Regardless of the reason behind Mukhtar's popularity, the question of his religious commitment coincides with the establishment of an initiatory hierarchy which is distinct from the Shi'ite structure. Since Shi'ite thought was already sufficiently delineated, we must say without hesitation that his divergent approach did not arouse much sympathy among the Shi'ites. The cause for such aversion is to be found in an accidental slip related to Imam Hasan. During his conflict with Mu'awiyyah, the Imam sought asylum in Mada'in, in the house of the governor Sa'd ibn Mas'ud who was Mukhtar's uncle. Unexpectedly and unexplicably, Mukhtar suggested to his uncle that he should turn in Imam Hasan to the Umayyad Caliph, who was searching for him. He told his uncle that he could subjugate the .deposed Caliph and declare that "The treaty made with Hasan is null and void

It is under my feet." Obviously, the governor emphatically rejected the treacherous suggestion made by his nephew. From this incident, we can only lament Mukhtar's political blunder which did not go unnoticed by the Shi'ites. They unanimously and severely reproached him for being so inconsiderate and disloyal towards the first son of 'Ali and the oldest grandson of the Prophet.[٢٢] Further on, in an isolated and equally accidental incident, he regained the confidence and the appreciation of the Shi'ites. This occurred when he refused to appear before Ziyyad ibn Abih, the Governor of Kufa, to testify against Hujr ibn Adi, the leader of the one of the Shi'ite rebellions to overthrow the tyrant. It seems that, from that moment onwards, Mukhtar adopted a position that was increasingly favorable towards the Shi'ite cause. At the same time, his revolutionary rhetoric acquired an undeniable messianic character which occasionally resembled .revelation

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Mukhtar was a man who possessed psychological qualities in line with his strong and unusually esoteric religious mentality. He quickly converted himself into a spontaneous orator. His rhetoric was smooth and eloquent. It overflowed with obscure reflections and periphrastic expressions, which gave it a poetic flow which superficially resembled the revealed word. His speeches gave the impression that they came from an inspired source. It was for this reason that Mukhtar often alleged that his spirit was illuminated by Gabriel, the Angel of Revelation, who in an ineffable and mysterious way warned him of .the unexpected

Mukhtar's ingenious rhetorical slips has a tremendous influence on his followers and convinced them of the appearance of the Awaited Mahdi, identified with Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah, who was coming to restore order and justice. Due to this deep-rooted Shi'ite conviction, he was considered by his followers as the "Representative of the Mahdi," namely, a delegate of the third son of Imam 'Ali. This is the manner in which he was recognized and allowed himself to be addressed. In the years ۶۸۵ and ۶۸۶, he established a Shi'ite-oriented government in Kufa. This was the first time this was done since the time of Imam 'Ali when he finally received his much delayed turn to occupy the Caliphate and .to fully assume the supreme role he had inherited from the Prophet

It must be remembered, however, that similar excesses on the part of Mukhtar caused, if not serious religious worries, at least considerable annoyance to the ruling religious authorities. His influence was great in the genesis of one sect, the Mukhtariyyah, but did not shake the foundation of Imami Gnosis. Although Mukhtar's ideas were not free from doctrinal errors, they did not radically alter the esoteric concept of the Hidden Imam which is the real touchstone of all Shi'ite thought: past, present and future.[۲۳] The repercussion of his ideas was sufficient to inspire the partial development of an erroneous path which, in its true sense, was nothing more than a stubbornness to .maintain ideas which were contrary to those espoused by the majority of Shi'ites

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In fairness, the interesting and eventful life of this unique man brought him the .opportunity to regain the sympathy of the Shi'ites

As we have said, avenging the death of Husayn, the martyr of Karbala, was the mission that was thrust upon Mukhtar al-Thaqifi, as well as Sulayman ibn Surad, leader of the tawwabun. The target of this vengeance was 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyyad, considered unanimously among Shi'ites to be the direct instigator and the main executor in the death of Imam Husayn and his family. And here is one of those interesting facts that mark the lives of the chosen ones; the martyr Maytham al-Tammar, one of the closest companions of Imam 'Ali and one of the saints of Islam who is highly venerated by Sufis, was imprisoned as a political prisoner by 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyyad on charges of conspiring against the Ummayad regime. Destiny would have it that Mukhtar was also in the same prison. It is there that Maytham predicted that, once he was released, he would fulfill his .mission of avenging Husayn which is, after all, exactly what happened

We have focused our attention on Mukhtar for the purpose of clearing up some common confusion related to the creation of the Party of 'Ali. We wish to take advantage of this opportunity to clarify another error. Bausani says that Mukhtar took over Kufa and preached messianic doctrines and starting diverting customs like the cult of the vacant throne. While this is the truth, it is not the complete truth. As "interesting" as this custom may be to Bausani--perhaps due to its symbolism--we must point out that Mukhtar never introduced "a cult of the vacant throne." As Dozy explains, the idea of the throne was simply an ingenious ruse that this clever and brilliant strategist contrived to incite his army to battle. He had the idea of purchasing an old armchair that he had re-upholstered with a fine and expensive silk, converting it into the famous "vacant throne" of 'Ali. This unusual inducement brought forth its desired fruit. Ibrahim, the commander of Mukhtar's troops, fought in an unusually brave and heroic fashion and killed 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyyad with his own sword. In the minds of the Shi'ite soldiers the supposed throne of 'Ali truly acquired a highly symbolic value. Mukhtar had told them at the beginning of the battle that the throne would represent for them what the Ark of the Covenant represented to .the Children of Israel

As serious as the political events that coincide with the start of Shi'ism were, they cannot be considered a sufficient reason for its historical appearance. It is certain that Abu Bakr's assumption of the Caliphate of the Islamic Community instead of 'Ali, the coerced resignation of Hasan and the martyrdom of Husayn, the division of the Islamic world into various groups as a result of the bloody raids and forays of Mu'awiyyah and Yazid--the founders of the Ummayad dynasty--forced Muslims, Gnostics included, to take sides. However, the reason for which they were fighting goes well beyond what today is ".qualified as "political

What we mean is that not all of the political insurrections which took place in the name of Shi'ism reflected the complex reality of the Imamate and what it represents metaphysically. Likewise, the development of the esoteric doctrine and thought of Shi'ism in Islam should not be linked to the appearance of the word "Shi'ite" or "Shi'ism." These terms simply designate a particular "party" or a "group" of Muslims.[٢۴] As Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr observes, one thing is the meaning of the term and the other is the distinct doctrine it designates. To say that the Shi'ites are a "party" of legitimistic minority Muslims .merely expresses one aspect of the term

In the time of the Prophet, as can be seen in many ahadith, there are references to the "Shi'ah of 'Ali" and the "Shi'ah of Ahl al-Bayt"[٢۵] In Arabic, shi'ah means "partisans," "adepts," or "followers" of someone.[٢۶] As a result, it is said that Shi'ites are those who are partisans of Imam 'Ali and his descendants. They are those who consider that the fulfillment of the sunnah of the Prophet demands the complete and obligatory observance of all of its dispositions and rulings. This evidently, and most importantly, includes the designation [nass] made by the Prophet of Imam 'Ali as his successor .[[khalifah

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Footnote

Editor's Note: This current which seeks to split Shi'ism into fractions has even spread [۱] among Muslim scholars. Sachedina holds that Shi'ism was a political movement which acquired religious undertones (Islamic Messianism ۵). Jafri recognizes the division between political Shi'ism and religious Shi'ism (۹۷) as does Rasul Ja'fariyan who speaks of three forms of Shi'ism: political, creedal and Iraqi. The truth of the matter, however, is that "Shi'ism was a religious movement that also encompassed social and political .(aspects of society" (Rizvi Chapter ۱

Editor's Note: The author's attitude is all-encompassing, eager to embrace, and [۲] stresses the common ground of tawhid on which all Muslims stand. This can be contrasted with Tijani's attitude which seeks more to splinter than to soothe, even rejecting the close legal, theological, philosophical and political ties which bind Twelvers, Seveners and Zaydis: "Our discussion does not invoke the other sects as Isma'iliyyah and Zaydiyyah, as we believe in their being like other sects in not adhering to Hadith al-thaqalayn, and their belief in 'Ali's Imamah after the Messenger of Allah is of no use" (The Shi'ah ۳۳۱ Note ۱). This attitude also ignores the similarities between Sunnism, Sufism and Shi'ism. As M.G.S. Hodgson explains, "in its whole piety Sunni Islam can be called half-Shi'ite" (۴). Similarly, Nasr observes that "In certain areas of the Islamic world...one meets among Sufis certain groups as devoted to the Shi'ite Imams, especially 'Ali and Husayn, as any Shi'ite could be, yet completely Sunni in their practice of the law [madhhab]" (Sufi Essays ۱۰۷). In reality, these so-called "half-Shi'ites" are neither one thing nor the other, ".but rather "seekers of the straight path

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[۳] Editor's Note: The Isma'iliyyah are known as Seveners as they follow Seven Imams, the first six Shi'ite Imams and Isma'il as the seventh.

[۴] Editor's Note: Some Isma'iliyyah adapted the Qarmathian syncretist catechism to other forms of monotheism, to Harranian paganism, and even to Mazdeism (Massignon ۶۰). As 'Allamah Tabataba'i notes, "The Isma'ilis have a philosophy in many ways similar to that of the Sabaeans [star worshippers] combined with elements of Hindu gnosis" (Shi'ite Islam ۷۸).

[۵] Editor's Note: As Netton explains, "The Sabaeans were a pagan sect

who, according to some, had cleverly identified themselves with the Sabi'un of the Qur'an to avoid persecution" (۱۵). Harran, in what is now southeastern Turkey, was the home of the star worshipping Sabaeans with their transcendent philosophy. As for the Mandaeans, they are members of an ancient Gnostic sect surviving in southern Iraq and which used the Aramaic language in their writings.

[۶] Editor's Note: Zayn al-'abidin is responsible for one of the great masterpieces of Shi'ite supplications, al-Sahifah al-sajadiyyah, rendered beautifully into English by William Chittick as The Psalms of Islam.

[۷] Author's Note: He was the fruit of the marriage between the Imam and a woman from the Hanafi tribe, rather than from the Prophet's daughter.

[۸] Editor's Note: For more English-language books on the Mahdi, consult Shaykh al-Mufid's Kitab al-irshad, Sachedina's Islamic Messianism; An Inquiry Concerning al-Mahdi by Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and Discussions Concerning al-Mahdi by Ayatullah Lutfullah Safi al-Gulpaygani.

[۹] Editor's Note: The Zaydis are followers of Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, the son of the ۴th Imam, who led a revolt against the Ummayads and was killed in ۷۳۸. Initially, the Zaydis held that the true Imam was the Husaynid Imam who rose up in revolt. Many of the Zaydis accepted the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and some even accepted the early part of 'Uthman's. This attitude was formulated in the theological doctrine of the Imamate of the mafdul [the less excellent]. It was agreed that 'Ali was al-afdal [the most excellent] but conceded that the Imamate of the less excellent could occur when the most

excellent did not publicly assert his right to the Imamate by armed revolt. For more on the beliefs of the Zaydis, see Howard's "Introduction" to Shaykh al-Mufid Kitab al-Irshad .((xxiii-xxv) and 'Allamah Tabataba'i's Shi'ite Islam (۷۶-۷۷

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Editor's Note: Although the sources differ on the subject, Isma'il may not have been [۱۰] qualified for the Imamate for several reasons: firstly, because his father Imam al-Sadiq had appointed Musa as his successor; secondly, because Isma'il passed away before his father; and thirdly, because Isma'il was an alcoholic. The Imamate is not a system of royalty or inheritance. It is a matter of divine pre-ordinance, a covenant from Allah. The tradition from the Sixth Imam, "There was no bada' [lit. "appearance" from ibda which means "to bring about"] for Allah like the bada' in the case of my son Isma'il" (Muzaffar ۱۴) gives the impression that Imam Sadiq appointed his son Isma'il as his successor. Since the Shi'ites do not believe in bada', namely, God giving the impression of something and then changing it, there are two possibilities here: ۱) the tradition in question is false or ۲) is :to be interpreted as follows

The meaning of the saying of Imam Sadiq is that Allah has not revealed any matter...in the case of Isma'il (the son of Imam Sadiq), by taking his life before he took his father's. This was so that people would understand that Isma'il was not the Imam, although it had (appeared in the situation as if he were, because he was the eldest son.(۱۴

In any event, the Sixth Imam did not designate his eldest son to be his successor, nor did .it cause a great doctrinal or theological problem among the Shi'ah

Editor's Note: The Waqifites were those who held that Musa was the Imam who [۱۱] .would return as the Madhi

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Editor’s Note: The belief in post-prophetic guidance is not exclusively Shi‘ite. It is [١٢] related in Sunni traditions that the Messenger of Allah said: “Surely Messengership and Prophethood are terminated, so there will be no messenger or prophet after me except mubashshirat” (Tirmidhi). He also stated that: “There is nothing to come of prophethood except mubashshirat.” People asked, “What are they?” The Holy Prophet replied, “True visions” and these were declared by the Holy Prophet to be one forty-sixth of .(prophethood (Bukhari

Editor’s Note: Ghulat, plural of ghali, is an Arabic term deriving from the verb ghala [١٣] which means “to exaggerate or exceed the proper bounds.” The verbal noun is ghuluw and means “exaggeration.” The ghulat or extremists are sects which deify ‘Ali. In Iran, they are known as the Ahl al-Haqq [people of the truth], ‘Ali Ilahis [‘Ali worshippers]: in Iraq they are called Shabak, Bajwan, Sarliyya, Kkaiyya, and Ibrahimiyyah. In Syria, they are known as Nusayris or ‘Alawis. In Turkey, they are called Bektashis, Kizilbash (Alevis), Takhtajis and Çepnis. The Shaykhis are also a modern ghulat group. They are followers of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa’i (d. ١٨٣٠) who taught that the infallible fourteen are the cause of the universe, in whose hands are the life and death and the livelihood of humanity. According to Moosa, al-Ahsa’i seems to justify this belief by explaining that God is too transcendent to operate the universe by Himself and therefore deputized the infallible fourteeen to operate the universe on his behalf (١٠٩). If this is correct, the Shaykhis ,ressemble the mufawwidah [the delegators]. As Fyzze explains

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The mufawwidah are those who believe that God created the Prophet

and ‘Ali and then ceased to function. Thereafter it was these two who arranged everything in the world. They create and sustain and destroy; Allah has nothing to do with .(these things. (۱۴۱

When examining the Shayhis, it is important to differentiate between the Baha’i-controlled group from the original teachings of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa’i. As far as Shi‘ism is concerned, there is no doubt that the Imams are the Lords of Existence. What happens with Ahmad al-Ahsa’i is that he developed entirely esoteric doctrines and many have understood him literally without understanding that the ideas he was expressing were metaphysical rather that philosophical or theological. For Gnostics, the role of the Imams is viewed cosmically. There is no doubt that the Babis and Baha’is have misinterpreted this role in an extreme fashion, the first in a esoteric way, and the latter in a literal way, distorting the doctrines of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa’i. The Universal Legislator is the one who initiates a cycle and brings it to its end. He does not destroy the world in a physical sense but in a historical one. He closes one cycle and commences a second. The Imams closed the Cycle of Prophecy only to initiate the Cycle of the Walayah. Imam Mahdi will come to close the Cycle of Walayah of the Prophet Muhammad. If Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa’i said that the Imams controlled the universe, he said so in the sense of prophetic hadith which states that without an Imam, the world would be destroyed and would not last a single second. There are also other Sunni and Shi‘ite traditions regarding Imam ‘Ali, making it clear that the Imam is center or heart of the world without whose presence the world would stop to exist. There is also the hadith which states that when Imam Mahdi returns, reason would leave the world and humanity would degenerate into destruction. The work of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa’i need to be re-examined from a Twelver Shi‘ite perspective. This is the only way his scholarship can be saved from Babi-Baha’i .interpretations which have distorted his original doctrines

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As for the ghulat, they are of different ethnic origins, speak different languages and are divided into different denominations, they share the common belief in the apotheosis of ‘Ali and in a trinity of God, Muhammad and ‘Ali or, as among the Nusayris, of ‘Ali, Muhammad and Salman al-Farsi. They practice holy communion and public or private confession. According to Moosa Matti, “[t]heir religion is a syncretism of extreme Shi‘ite, pagan, and Christian beliefs, and they fall outside the pale of orthodox Islam” (۴۱۸). In fact, “some of the beliefs of the ghulat

.(have a greater affinity with ancient astral cults and Christianity than with Islam” (ix

The Prophet Muhammad prophesized their appearance when he told ‘Ali: “In one respect, you are like Jesus. The Jews went so far in hating him that they turned hostile towards him and calumniated his mother and the Christians loved him to much that they elevated him to an underserved status.” On another occasion, he told him that “I fear some sects of my community will say of you what the Christians said of Jesus” (Nisaburi ۱: ۱۱۲-۱۳) and “‘Ali, if if was not for the fact that I am concerned that some factions will say of you what the Christians say of Jesus, son of Mary, I would say of you today words such as (after them) you would never pass a gathering of men without them taking the soil from your .(feet” (Mufid ۷۹

Imam ‘Ali warned against the extremists, saying that “Two groups will fall into perdition: The extremist who adore me unduly; and the enemies whose animosity leads them to calumniate me.” The nasibis are those who love ‘Ali too little; the ghulat are those who literally adore him. The Imams who followed ‘Ali condemned the extremists in the .(harshest terms (Rayshani

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Despite its deficiencies, Matti's Extremist Shi'ites is one of the only scholarly books on extremist Shi'ites available in English. Regrettably, the autor makes some ludicrous claims; namely, ۱) asserting that "when the muezzins in Iran call the people to prayer they cry out Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! Khomeini is Rahbar, Khomeini is Rahbar' (Allah is Most Great; Allah is Most Great! Khomeini is the religious guide) thus placing Khomeini before the testimony of faith that 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah' (۹۹); ۲) attempting to prove that the Shi'ites of Iran maintain that although 'Ali is not God, he is not far from being one (xxiii); ۳) asserting that Sunnism represents Islamic orthodoxy (۴۲۱); ۴) and, finally, ۵) categorizing the ghulat as heterodox as opposed to heretical (۴۱۸). It should also be noted that the term ghulat has different connotations .depending on who uses it. In Sunni sources, even moderate figures are seen as ghulat

Editor's Note: As Nasr explains, "The zanadiqah [sing. Zindiq] are identified specifically [۱۴] in Islamic history with Manichaeans, but the word is also used more generally ... to mean unbeliever and heretic" (A Shi'ite Anthology ۶۵, note ۱۲۵). Saif ibn 'Umar al-Tamini is categorically discredited by 'Allamah Murtaza 'Askari in his 'Abdullah ibn Saba and Other Myths, ۳rd. ed. trans. M.J. Muqaddas, Tehran: Islamic Thought Foundation, ۱۹۹۵. Sukaynah bint Husayn, who died shortly after the tragedy of Karbala, was also transformed into a literary character by story-tellers and is now exploited by feminist writers like Fatimah .(Mernessi (۱۹۲-۹۴

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Editor's Note: Hector Abu Dharr Manzolillo's article "Los 'conversos' en países con [۱۵] minorías musulmanas" ["Muslim 'Converts' in Countries where Muslims are a Minority"] .addresses this issue with eloquence

Editor's Note: As Jafri explains, "Mu'awiyyah seems to have been trying to destroy, at [۱۶] the slightest pretext, those of 'Ali's followers who could not be bought or intimidated into .submission" (۱۶۷). In short, the history of Shi'ism is written with the blood of martyrs

Editor's Note: Rather than 'Umar, the "abomination of desolation" (Daniel ۹:۲۷; [۱۷] Matthew, ۲۴:۱۵; Mark ۱۳: ۱۴) might more appropriately refer to Mu'awiyyah's coronation as .Caliph

Editor's Note: At the beginning of the reign of 'Uthman when the Ummayads occupied [۱۸] prominent positions, Abu Sufyan said: "O Children of Ummayyah! Now that this kingdom has come to you, play with it as the children play with a ball, and pass it from one to another in your clan. We are not sure whether there is a paradise or hell, but this kingdom is a reality." (al-Isti'ab by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr ۴: ۱۶۷۹) In Sharh ibn Abi Hadid, the last sentence is quoted as follows: "By him in whose name Abu Sufyan swears, there is neither punishment nor reckoning, neither Garden nor Fire, neither Resurrection nor Day of Judgment!" (۹: ۵۳) Then Abu Sufyan went to Uhud and kicked at the grave of Hamzah [the uncle of the Prophet who was martyred in the Battle of Uhud in fighting against Abu Sufyan] and said: "O Abu Ya'la! See that the kingdom which you fought against has finally .(come back to us." (Sharh ibn Abi Hadid, ۱۶: ۱۳۶

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When Mu‘awiyyah took over the Caliphate he said that “I didn’t fight you to pray, fast, and pay charity, but rather to be your leader and control you” (Tadhkirat al-khawas, Sibt Ibn al-Jawzi al-Hanafi, ۱۹۱-۱۹۴; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, in his Sirah; Abu Nu‘aym; al-Suddi and al-Sha‘bi). There are numerous instances where Mu‘awiyyah is recorded as saying, in reference to himself, “I am the first king in Islam” (Jafri ۱۵۴). When Yazid became Caliph, he said: “Hashimite played with the throne, but no revelation was revealed, nor was there a true message” (History of al-Tabari, Arabic, ۱۳: ۲۱۷۴; Tadhkirat al-khawas; Sibt Ibn al-Jawzi al-Hanafi ۲۶۱). The Caliph Mansur defiantly declared: “Only I am the authority of God upon His earth” (Jafri ۲۸۰; Tabari, Tarikh III ۴۲۶). The Turkish Sultans described themselves as the “Shadows of God on Earth.”

[۱۹] Editor’s Note: Yazid, son of Mu‘awiyyah, son of Abu Sufyan ruled from ۶۰ A.H. to ۶۴ A.H. His army sacked Madinah in ۶۳ A.H., killing ۱۷,۰۰۰ Muslims, and leaving ۱,۰۰۰ Muslim women pregnant as the result of rape. Thereafter, his army marched on Makkah, destroying one of the walls of the Holy Ka‘bah and setting it on fire (Darul Towheed ۱۳۹). He enacted the wholesale massacre of the Prophet’s Family at Karbala in which Husayn, the second son of ‘Ali and Fatimah, was martyred along with his faithful band of ۷۲ followers. Only ‘Ali, the son

of Husayn, was providentially spared, due to illness.

[۲۰] Editor’s Note: See P. K. Hitti, History of the Arabs from the Earliest Times to the Present ۱۰th ed. (London ۱۹۷۰): ۱۹۱.

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[۲۱] Editor's Note: The very name, "the Place of Suffering" or "Land of Anguish," is indicative of the tragedy that befell there.

[۲۲] Editor's Note: For a more complete understanding of the circumstances that led Imam Hasan to make a treaty with Mua'wiyyah, see 'Abbas Ahmad al-Bostani's Pour une lecture correcte de l'Imam al-Hassan et de son traité de réconciliation avec Mu'âwieh. For an overview of the quietist as opposed to activist approach to politics in Shi'ite Islam, see my "Strategic Compromise in Islam."

[۲۳] Editor's Note: The belief in the Invisible Imam is at the heart of Shi'ite Islam.

[۲۴] Editor's Note: The term "Sunni" came later in Islamic history. The early Muslims were known as Shi'ites: Shi'ites of 'Ali, Shi'ites of Mua'wiyyah, and so forth. See Ja'fariyan's "Shi'ism and its Types during the Early Centuries."

[۲۵] Editor's Note: The Messenger of Allah said: "Glad tiding O 'Ali! Verily you and your companions and your Shi'ah will be in Paradise" (Sunni References: Fada'il al-sahabah, by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, v. ۲, ۶۵۵; Hilyatul awliyya', by Abu Nu'aym, v. ۴, ۳۲۹; Tarikh, by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, v. ۱۲, ۲۸۹; al-Awsat, by al-Tabarani; Majma' al-zawa'id, by al-Haythami, v. ۱۰, ۲۱-۲۲; al-Darqutni, who said, "This tradition has been transmitted via numerous authorities;" al-sawa'iq al-muhriqah, by

Ibn Hajar Haythami, ch.۱۱, section ۱, ۲۴۷; Durr al-manthur, Suyuti, vol. VI, ۳۷۹). The Messenger of Allah said the following about 'Ali: "I swear by Him who holds my life in His hands, this person and his partisans [shi'ah] will have salvation on the Day of Judgment" (Suyuti). The Messenger of Allah said: "'Ali and his Shi'ah are the successful ones" (Mufid ۲۵, Muwaffaq). The Prophet said to 'Ali that "I, you, Fatimah, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn were created of the same clay, and our partisans [the Shi'ites] were created from the remainder of that clay" (Nisaburi ۱۰۱-۰۲; Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Tabari ۲۰, ۲۴, ۹۶). In another tradition, the Most Noble Messenger says that: "I am a tree whose main branch is Fatimah, whose pollen is 'Ali, whose fruit is al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and whose leaves are the partisans [Shi'ites] and lovers of my community" (Ibn Ibrahim ۲۲۲; Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Tabari ۴۰, ۶۳). The Messenger of Allah said: "Seventy thousand of my community will enter Heaven without any reckoning and punishment against them." Then he turned to 'Ali and said: "They are your Shi'ah and you are their

Imam" (Mufid ٢۶). The Messenger of Allah said: "'Ali, the first four to enter heaven are myself, you, al-Hasan and al-Husayn. Our progeny [will come] behind us and our loved ones will be behind our progeny. To our right and left will be our Shi'ah" (Mufid ٢۶; al-Manaqib by Ahmad; al-Tabarani, as quoted in al-Sawa'iq al-muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar Haythami, ch. ١١, section ١, ٢۴۶). The Messenger of Allah said: "O 'Ali! [On the Day of Judgment] you and your Shi'ah will come toward Allah well-pleased and well-pleasing, and there will come to Him your enemies angry and stiff-necked" (al-Tabarani, on the authority of Imam 'Ali, al-Sawa'iq al-muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, ch. ١١, section ١, ٢٣۶). The Messenger of Allah said: "O 'Ali! On the Day of Judgment I shall resort to Allah and you will resort to me and your children will resort to you and the Shi'ah will resort to them. Then you will see where they carry us" [to Paradise]" (Rab al-abrar by al-Zamakhshari). Ibn 'Abbas narrated: When the verse "Those who believe and do righteous deeds are the best of the creation" (Qur'an ٩٨:٧) was revealed, the Messenger of Allah said to 'Ali: "They are you and your Shi'ah." He continued: "O 'Ali! [On the Day of Judgment] you and your Shi'ah will come toward Allah well-pleased and well-pleasing, and your enemies will come angry with their head forced up." 'Ali said: "Who are my enemies?" The Prophet replied: "He who disassociates himself from you and curses you. And glad tiding to those who reach first under the shadow of al-'arsh on the day of resurrection." 'Ali asked: "Who are they, O the Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "Your Shi'ah, O 'Ali, and those who love you" (al-Hafiz Jamal al-Din al-Dharandi, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas; al-Sawa'iq al-muhriqah by Ibn Hajar, Ch. ١١, section ١, ٢۴۶-٢۴٧). On the basis of this evidence, we can safely conclude that "Shi'ism existed in the lifetime of the Prophet as a nascent movement" (Moosa ٩٥). However, while there are discernable Shi'ite elements during the lifetime of the Prophet, "the hard-and-fast divisions of later centuries are not discernible in the earlier period. There were Sunni elements with definite Shi'ite tendencies, and there were Shi'ite contacts with Sunni elements both intellectually and socially" (Nasr Sufi .(Essays ١٠۶-١٠٧

Editor's Note: The word Shi'ite derives from the Arabic verb shaya'a, meaning "to [۲۶] ".adhere to; to support a common cause; to be a partisan of it

CHAPTER ۶

THE CALIPHATE AT A CROSSROADS

:The Caliphate at a Crossroads

Abu Bakr and the Collusion of the Powerful Classes

The afternoon of the ۲۸th of Safar of the year ۱۱ A.H., which corresponds to May ۲۵th of the year ۶۳۲ A.D., is marked with indelible precision in Islamic history. With the flow of time, this event and those which followed it led to a radical political change in the socio-religious orientation of the Muslim world. It is the ill-fated day of the demise of the Prophet Muhammad, the date of the closing of the "cycle of prophethood" [da'irat al-nubuwwah] and, simultaneously and successively, the opening of the "cycle of initiation" or the "esoteric cycle of the Imams" [da'irat al-wilayah]. The passing away of the Prophet constitutes the most tragic moment in which two distinct conceptions of authority and power confront themselves. The first was motivated by "eternal interests" and wanted to follow the straight path, shown by the final mandate of God and His Messenger, to its end. The second was embroiled in an intricate web of "personal interests," seeking social benefits and political privilege in which Islam, evidently, occupied a subaltern role. This later group represented the mentality of a segment of early Muslims who were unable to [replace the ties of blood with the ties of faith.[۱

Historians explain that the death of the Prophet and the issue of his succession led to plots, intrigues, alliances, underground opposition and corrupt forms of collusions. According to these academics, they were all provoked by the powerful representatives of the dominant class whose differences with 'Ali were motivated by political ambition from the very beginning. This interpretation, however, is far too simplistic when we consider the rivalry between the two factions, the emigrants [muhajirun] and the allies [ansar].[۲] The first, long accustomed to strong tribal authority, treaties, and blood-ties, wanted to maintain some of the political privileges and ancient social considerations abolished by Islam. They wanted to take advantage of the Prophet's death to reclaim power by .appointing a Caliph who would be loyal to them: Abu Bakr

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The appointment of ‘Ali as successor, however, came from a divine mandate. Unlike the opportunistic and orchestrated election of Abu Bakr, ‘Ali’s investiture was rooted in the historical event of Ghadir. In the ۱۱th year of the Hijrah, the Prophet made a solemn pilgrimage to Makkah, known as Hajjat al-wada’ [the Farewell Pilgrimage].[۳] During his return, he stopped on the ۱۸th of Dhu’l-Hijjah at the pond of Ghadir Khumm in front of ۱۲۰,۰۰۰ Muslims. Shi‘ite commentators point to the event of Ghadir as the definitive proof, not only of the fulfillment of the Prophet’s mission, but of God’s permanent commitment to the preservation of Islam by the concession of a wilayah to His Final Messenger.[۴] The perfection and completion of Islam was conditioned and dependent on the designation of the Prophet’s successor for, as we read in the Qur’an [۴:۳], the Messenger and the guidance go hand and hand. As a result, both the Prophethood and the Imamate must .follow the same path

Zayd ibn al-Arqam relates that “the first to visit and congratulate ‘Ali were Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, Talhah and Zubayr: the congratulations and the bay‘ah [oaths of loyalty] continued until sunset .[۵] What stands out from this and other trustworthy and authentic Sunni traditions is that when the Prophet publicly appointed ‘Ali as his successor and executor, placing his wilayah in his descendants, neither Abu Bakr nor ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, who ended up preceding ‘Ali in the succession of the historical Caliphate, contested the matter nor did they have the audacity to claim any special rights. Abu Bakr never insisted upon his superiority over ‘Ali. He never claimed to have more right to rule over the Muslims and for them to obey him. To be precise, the event that unleashed an endless series of internal division, known by Arab historians as the fitnah [insubordination / sedition], came quite unexpectedly. It coincides with Abu Bakr, the son of Abu Quhafah, being illegitimately appointed as the successor of the Prophet. His appointment took place through the collusion of powerful interests. It was they who granted him the leadership of the Islamic community by means of a pre-Islamic consultative assembly [[shurah].[۶

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When commenting on this practice, Modernist Sunni scholars commonly claim that Abu Bakr was recognized as Caliph through a "democratic" election, based on the decision and consensus of a majority.[۷] This gives the false impression that this ancient form of consultation is comparable to the modern democratic systems found in the Western world. It must be recalled, though, that the people did not participate in this elective act in the political sense that we understand it today. Quite the opposite was true. The people were completely excluded from the process, including 'Ali, his Family and the closest Companions of the Prophet.[۸] The shurah [a fundamental organism of the pre-Islamic constitutional system] that was convoked in Saqifah was limited to the council of tribal chiefs exclusively composed of the dominant classes who were open and organized enemies of 'Ali.[۹]

As a result, the Islamic Caliphate, the first de facto Islamic government, by far the highest and most important religious and political institution in the Sunni world, begins when Abu Bakr decides to take personal power. As Caliph, Abu Bakr assumes the role of leading and governing the rest of Muslims in accord with a sovereign authority and jurisdiction which, until the time of the Prophet's death, was expressed in his culmination of the prophethood. While the Prophet lived, the Caliphate was, in the person of Muhammad, a holy and indivisible entity. After his death, though, ambitions became impatient. The result was the rupture of what, by divine design, was inseparable, the prophethood and the wilayah, the Caliphate and the Imamate, which were meant to go hand in hand, since there can never be one without the other.[۱۰] It was for this reason that the Prophet said in the Tradition of Ghadir, "to whomsoever I was the lord and master 'Ali is your lord and master."[۱۱]

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The initiatory role and function of the Caliphate and the Imamate are the same. They are characteristic of the spiritual authority and the temporal power of the Imam. They are non-transferable and cannot be subjected to the ballot box. When we say that the functions of the Imam are "non-transferable" we specifically mean that these powers and functions are not at the reach of unqualified individuals. Spiritual and political leadership is not available to all. They cannot be seized by force or by consensus. The powers in question are exclusive. They are superior by their very nature. They are divine by origin and not by artifice. The Imamate requires an individual with exceptional perfection and .cannot be shared with all individuals

Abu Bakr's attitude and actions forever destroyed the esoteric foundation of the succession of the Prophet. Concerned more with justifying his own personal superiority, he constantly stressed that consensus was indispensable when it came to continuing the exoteric work of the Prophet. This is the reason why, according to some later Sunni commentaries, it is often asserted that Abu Bakr was selected Caliph because the Prophet had not clearly designated a successor. The truth, however, is altogether different. Although some Sunni scholars admit that the most important traditional sources contain numerous testimonies that manifest, with great clarity, the legitimate rights of succession of 'Ali, they insist, nonetheless, that the Prophet may very well have changed [his mind at the last minute and finally decided to place Abu Bakr in the place of 'Ali.[١٢

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We must remember that, according to the clearest and most unanimous accounts, there is no indication whatsoever that the Prophet changed his mind regarding 'Ali or did anything to retract his previous decision, annulling, canceling, or removing his primary rank as a member of the Prophetic Household. If he had changed his mind, he would have made it known publicly in front of all Muslims with the same clarity and precision that he had used previously to proclaim 'Ali as the head of the community at Ghadir Khumm. It was well-known by all Muslims of the time that the Prophet never acted out of haste. His decisions were well meditated upon. What certain Sunni commentators seem to forget, or fail to take into consideration, is the consequence of the ultimate mandate of God to His Messenger in the moment that the following ayat was revealed: "And today I have perfected your religion and have chosen Islam as your religion." [۴:۳].

If some Sunni commentators defend the superiority of Abu Bakr because he was respected by some of the Prophet's Companions; on the other hand, there are numerous clear accounts concerning the superiority of 'Ali. Any educated individual, who objectively examines the circumstances surrounding the death of the Prophet, can only conclude that 'Ali was the victim of a political plot. He was the victim of a conspiracy aimed at denying him the legitimate exercise of his political functions as Spiritual Magistrate as Caliph and Imam. In this light, is it not significant that Abu Bakr changed the name of his post, calling himself "Caliph"--in the sense of "substitute" and not "successor"--as opposed to Imam?[۱۳]

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On the basis of the aformentioned, we cannot come to a favorable conclusion to support the superiority of Abu Bakr. If we stick objectively to the reports found in traditional primary sources, we must address the metaphysical and esoteric reasons for 'Ali's appointment as the successor of the Prophet. It was at Ghadir Khumm were Muhammad transmitted his wilayah [guardianship] as an exoteric personification of temporal power and a representation of the esoteric unity and universality of the spiritual authority. Certain Orientalists, who focus exclusively on superficial interpretations, may indeed admit the superiority of 'Ali. However, they view the whole question as a political dispute among two factions struggling for the succession of the Prophet which resulted in the victory of Abu Bakr. Similarly, when studying the Prophetic Traditions, many Sunni commentators deny or fail to recognise the status of 'Ali and his Imamate as a .continuation of the personal primacy of the Prophet

The same selective blindness regarding the status of 'Ali, however, does not occur among Sufi sages. In Sufism, one aspect does not exclude the other. As a result, both exoterically and esoterically, Abu Bakr and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib can be seen as the arkan or pillars of Islam. For Sufism, 'Ali, as founder of the founder of the wilayah [guardianship], legatee and living preserver, present at all times, continues to be the spiritual foundation of Islamic gnosis due to his innate dignity and power as qutb al-aqtab [the Pole of the Spiritual Poles]. Abu Bakr, on the other hand, is the visible foundation of the religion due to the powers that were conferred upon him through the consensus of the Companions. For Sufism, they both fulfill this function simultaneously: both Abu Bakr and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib are the pillars of the religion in its external and formal manifestations. The interesting thing, however, is that for the Sufis, the First Imam of the Shi'ites is the Pillar of all Pillars, even of Abu Bakr, in the sense that upon the death of the Prophet he assumed all of his .functions and prerogatives

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Sufism, as is well known, contains formulations that are more esoteric than exoteric. It should not be overlooked that the very establishment of Sufism in the Sunni world is the result of the unbalancing action caused by Abu Bakr when he split the exoteric from the esoteric by assuming the leadership of the Muslim community. Even though Sufism and Shi'ism are entirely orthodox expressions of Islam, Sunnis have always viewed them with extreme suspicion due to their constant reference to 'Ali as al-bab or "the gate" to Muhammadan gnosis and initiation. According to the exoteric exegesis of some Sunni scholars, the Prophet is also a Legislator, since in Islam the sacred law permeates all aspects of religious and social life. For Sunni scholars, the Caliph or Imam is the Successor of the Prophet, but only as a partial executor of the Law as given and is in no way a .spiritual successor of the Prophet

Sunni theologians justify the historical need for the Caliphate, as an institution, from the point of view that one of the objectives of the Prophet was the creation of a strong organized Islamic State. For Sunnis, the Imam or Caliph must possess the following qualities: belong to the tribe of Quraysh [the tribe to which Muhammad belonged], be competent and capable, possess knowledge and virtue; be worthy of ruling men and guide them along the straight moral and religious path through the rigorous application of the formal divine laws. He may be named directly by the Prophet or the preceding Caliph .or by means of "election," namely, through designation by the elders of the community

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Footnote

Editor's Note: This shows that things are not much different today among many [۱] .Muslims, where ties of blood, clan, and tribe, takes precedence over Islam

Editor's Note: Having been rivals with the Hashimites, the Prophet's clan, for two [۲] generations, the Ummayads could not accept the supremacy God had given to the :Hashimites by sending his messenger from within his tribe. As Ja'fariyan explains

There is indisputable evidence provided by older and recent research that there existed two distinct factions during the era of the Messenger of God. The first consisted of the Quraysh who were not on good terms with the Banu Hashim even before the advent of Islam. The second faction was that of the supporters of 'Ali consisting of the Hashimis and their supporters from among the Muhajirin and the Ansar, such as Abu Dharr, 'Ammar, Miqdad and Salman. Al-Farsi concedes the existence of these two factions before the episode of Saqifah. The extent of their political differences, which had religious roots from the very beginning, increased with time. For instance, some of the Companions from the very early days did not recognize a role for the Prophet's sunnah by the side of the Qur'an. This belief was the important characteristic of the Qurayshi faction. Denial of the religious authority of the Prophet's prescriptions and prohibition on the writing and narration of hadith are clearly visible elements in the stance of the leaders of this faction right from the Prophet's days. Without doubt one can say that the Companions of the Prophet formed two different groups from this angle: those who believed in the necessity of following the Prophet in all aspects and those who did not consider it obligatory to follow the Prophet in matters relating to government and political affairs. The pre-Islamic .influence of the Quraysh, along with other factors, led the latter group to acquire power

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Jafri further confirms that although “Muhammad’s progressive Islamic action had succeeded in suppressing Arab conservatism, embodied in heathen pre-Islamic practices and ways of thinking… in less than thirty years’ time this Arab conservatism revitalized itself as a forceful reaction to challenge Muhammad’s action once again” (۲۰۲).

[۳] Editor’s Note: The tradition of Ghadir Khum is mutawatir [continuous]. In other words, it is a tradition that has been accepted by Muslims generation after generation down from the time of the Prophet and has been reported by such a large number of authentic chains of narration that it is impossible that they should have agreed on a falsehood. Its authority is thus unquestionable and can be accepted as a historical fact. There is a difference of opinion as to the number of narrators needed for a tradition to be considered mutawatir. Some consider four to be the minumum required; others five, seven or ten. And yet others raise it further to forty or even seventy. In the case of the tradition of Ghadir Khum; it meets the most stringent requirements, having been narrated by hundreds of reporters from all schools of thought.

[۴] Editor’s Note: For a detailed discussion of the event of Ghadir, consult ‘Abd al-Husayn Ahmad al-Amini’s ۱۱ volume encyclopedic work al-Ghadir fi al-kitab wa al-sunnah.

[۵] Editor’s Note: All of whom broke their oath to Allah, the Prophet and ‘Ali. If the tradition “Everyone rejected Islam after the death of the Prophet except three: al-Miqdad ibn Aswad, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari and Salman al-Farsi” (Kulayni) refers to kufr millah, the state of a person who is a not a true Muslim yet adheres to the external trappings of Islam, then it is partially correct; otherwise, if it refers to kufr riddah, unbelief as a result of apostacy, it is an overgeneralization and must be rejected. In any event, the Messenger of Allah warned Imam ‘Ali that “The community will betray you after me” (Mufid ۲۱۰).

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Author's Note: Shura is a pre-Islamic custom in which elections and votes alternate [۶] giving place to a succession of consultative councils. These consultative councils became increasingly narrow until they reached the tribal leader, the living executive chief. The only thing that limited his exercise of absolutist power was the enormous coercion to which he was subjected. Although shura was the method in which pre-Islamic Arabic tribes selected leaders and made major decisions, some

of the Companions pointed to the following Qur'anic verses as an endorsement for its use in selecting the Caliph: "So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them [the believers] upon the conduct of affairs" (۳:۱۵۹) and "those who conduct their affairs by counsel [are praised]" (۴۳:۳۸). According to Shi'ite scholars these verses do not refer to the appointment of the Caliph or the Imam, something which was divinely .decreed

Editor's Note: They often say that in the Islamic system of shura, it is not only the [۷] heads that are counted, but the weight of the heads. Hence, they endorse this oligarchic "democracy" of the elite. As Jafri notes, Abu Bakr's succession was realized neither through a free election in any sense of the term nor through a free choice of the community. It was simply a decision by a particular group of muhajirun which was hastily forced or thrust upon others. Its success was due only to the delicate existing group conflicts in Medina. This is obvious from 'Umar's own statement...that 'Admittedly it was a .(hasty affair but God averted the evil of it.' (۴۹

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The same applies for ‘Umar’s appointment. As Jafri explains, ‘Umar’s nomination…was neither based on the method of consulation with the elite of the people, nor was the opinion of the community in general sought before the choice was made. It was simply Abu Bakr’s own personal and arbitrary decision, which he wanted to be endorsed by only those of the Companions whom he considered most important from a clannish point of .(view. (۶۴

Editor’s Note: Those who were excluded from the Saqifah included ‘Ali, al-‘Abbas, most [۸] of Banu Hashim, Usama b. Zayd, al-Zubayr, Salman al-Farisi, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, al-,Miqdad ibn al-Aswad

Ammar b. Yasir, Hudhayfah b. al-Yamam, Khuzaymah b. Thabit, Abu Burayd al-Aslami,’ al-Bura’ b. ‘Azib, Abu Ka‘b, Sahl ibn Hanif, Sa‘ad b. ’Ubadah, Qays b. Sa‘d, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Jabir ibn Sa‘d, Khalid b. Sa‘d, and many others. See, Muhammad al-Tijani, Then I was Guided, ۲nd ed. (Beirut: N.P, ۱۹۹۰): ۱۶۴, referring to Tarikh al-Tabari, Tarikh ibn al-.Athir, Tarikh al-khulafa’ by Ibn Qutaybah, and Tarikh al-Khamis

The testimonies that attest to the opposition and collusion of Abu Bakr’s followers can [۹] be seen in Ibn Hanbal, IV, ۲۸۱; Ibn Abi al-Hadid, VI, ۴۲; Ibn Qutaybah, I, ۱۸; Bukhari IV, ۱۲۷; Ibn ‘Asakir, al-Tarikh al-kabir (Damascus n.d.) II, ۵۰; ‘Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanz al‘-ummal (Hyderabad ۱۳۶۴/۱۹۴۴-۴۵) VI ۳۹۷. Mu‘awiyyah’s response to Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr (who was one of the faithful and unconditional followers of ‘Ali) is interesting in that he explictly recognized that his mandate as well as Abu Bakr’s primacy were the result of a plot and conspiracy of the oligarchic sectors against the First Imam’s rights of succession. See, ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Mas‘udi Muruj al-dhahab wa ma‘adin al-jawahir (Bayrut ۱۹۶۶), II; the version of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib regarding these episodes is found in the famous Khutbat al-shiqhshiqiyyah, found in Nahj al-balaghah, ibid, khutbah III, ۵۹-۶۱; Ibn al-Hadid, I, ۳۴; concerning what was discussed between ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab and the members of the shura during the reunion of the Saqifah, see Abu Ja‘far al-Tabari, Tarikh al-Rusul wa’l muluk, ed. M.J. de Goeje et alter (Leiden ۱۸۷۹-۱۹۰۱), I, ۱۸۳۷-۱۸۴۵; ۱۶۸۳; ۱۸۲۷; ۲۷۷۹; al-Baladhuri, I, ۵۸۸; V. ۱۹-۲۱; ۳۳; ۴۹. It is impossible to summarize in a few titles the vast repertoire of sources referring to the saqifah. We have found it useful, en cambio, to list some of the principle sources and, some of the easily accessible English sources. See, Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-balaghah, ed. M. Abu‘l Fadl Ibrahim (Beirut ۱۹۶۵), II, ۲۰-۲۵; ۴۴-

۶۰; III ۲۷۵; Jalal al-Din Suyuti, Tarikh al-khulafa', ed. A. al-Hamid (Cairo ۱۹۶۴); ۶۱-۷۲; al-Baladhuri, Ansab al-ashraf, ed., by M. Hamidullah (Cairo ۱۹۵۵), I, ۵۷۹-۵۹۱; Ibn Qutaybah, Tarikh al-khulafa' (Cairo ۱۹۶۴), I, ۱۸: ۶۱-۷۲; Ibn Kazir, al-Bidayah wa al-nihayah (Cairo ۱۹۳۲) ,V, ۲۱۲; A. Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad (Cairo ۱۸۹۵) IV, ۱۳۶, ۱۶۴, ۱۷۲

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cfr. Also S.H.M. Jafri The Origins and Development of Shi‘ah Islam (Qum ۱۹۸۹, II, ۲۷-; ۲۸۱ ۵۷); M.R. al-Mudharar, The ‘Saqifah’ (Tehran ۱۹۹۳), passim; D.M. Donaldson, The Shi‘ite Religion (London ۱۹۳۳); Muhammad Husayn Tabataba’i, o.c., I, ۳۹-۵۰.

Editor’s Note: As Jafri explains, “The material preserved in the sources also strongly suggests that Abu Bakr and ‘Umar had formed an alliance long before” (۴۹).

[۱۰] Editor’s Note: Regardless of the qualities he may have possessed, Abu Bakr’s action cannot be taken lightly. He disobeyed Allah and His Messenger, undermined a divine design and usurped temporal authority. The result was a rupture between the spiritual and worldly realms of catastrophic consequences.

[۱۱] Editor’s Note: As Jafri notes,

As far as the authenticity of the event itself is concerned, it has hardly ever been denied or questioned even by the most conservative Sunni authorities, who have themselves recorded it. Most noteworthy among them are Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal in his Musnad, Tirmidhi, Nasa‘i, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud and almost all other sunan writers, Ibn al-Athir in his Usud al-ghabah, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in his Isti‘ab, followed by all other writers of biographical works and even Ibn

Abd Rabbih in his ‘Iqd al-Farid and Jahiz in his ‘Uthmaniyyah. The traditions of Ghadir are’ so abundantly reported and commonly attested by hundreds of transmitters belonging to all schools of thought that it would be futile to doubt their authenticity. Ibn Kathir, a most staunch supporter of the Sunni viewpoint, has devoted seven pages to this subject and has collected a great number of different isnads from which the tradition is narrated. It is also Ibn Kathir who informs us that the famous historian al-Tabari, in a two-volume unfinished work entitled Kitab al-fada’il...wrote in full details of the Prophet’s discourse in favour of ‘Ali at Ghadir Khum. A modern scholar, Husayn ‘Ali Mahfuz, in his penetrating researches on the subject of Ghadir Khum, has recorded with documentation that this tradition has been narrated by at least ۱۱۰ Companions, ۸۴ tabi‘un, ۳۵۵ ‘ulama’, ۲۵ historians, ۲۷ traditionists, ۱۱ exegisists, ۱۸ theologians and ۵ philologists. Most of them were later counted by the Sunnis as among their own number. (۱۹-۲۰)

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The Event of Ghadir Khumm in the Qur'an, Hadith and History compiled by the Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project cites ٧۶ companions, ۶٩ successors, and ۶٢۶ scholars in the chains of transmission, recorded in ١٨٢ Sunni books. In addition, it provides Arabic text for ٣٨٧ narrations, English translation for ٧٨ narrations, scanned pages from ۵۴ books and ٢٨٠ .quotations on the reliability of narrators in Arabic and ٣٢۴ in English

[١٢] Editor's Note: Such a volte-face from the Prophet is not plausible. This is the man who taught that "Haste is from Satan" (Imam Mazhari Tafsir Mazhari, Ibn Hayyan al-Bahr al-muhit).

[١٣] Editor's Note: The concept and foundation of the Caliphate was erroneous and, after the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, soon degenerated into debauchery. As for Yazid,

[He] was the first among the caliphs to drink wine in public...he sought the worst company, spending much of his time in the pleasures of music and singing and amusing himself with apes and dogs. He himself had no use for religion, nor had he any regard for the religious sentiments of others. Addicted to wine-bibbing, attracted to singing-girls, and exposed to all sorts of vices, Yazid has never been presented in good terms by any Muslim writer of nay period or by any school of thought. (Jafri ١٧۴)

The Imamate, however, remained pure and pristine, lead by the most God-fearing leading scholars and spiritual authorities of the age, the Imams from ahl al-bayt.

CHAPTER ٧

PROPHECY AND IMAMATE

:Prophecy and Imamate

Two Inseparable Metaphysical Realities

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For Sunni Muslims, the legitimacy of the Caliphate is an issue of secondary or relative importance. According to Sunni thought, even an illegitimate Caliph is acceptable as long as he has sufficient strength and ability to resolve the socio-economic problems of the society.[١] It is easily understood how individuals with stubborn tribal mentalities and notions of superiority could perceive the Caliphate as being the pinnacle of Arabism. Even the trials and tribulations they suffered due to their loyalty to Islam and the Prophet could not make them forget their prior status as oligarchic tribal chiefs. It is therefore not surprising that the election of Abu Bakr as Caliph was based on pre-Islamic tribal customs. The Caliphate allowed the tribal chiefs to satisfy their nostalgia for the Old Order by giving the emerging system, despite its radical transformation, traits of political and economic centralism which has been abolished by Islam[٢].

Abu Bakr assumed the Caliphate, not through the legitimacy of his aspiration, but through the complicity of his peers from the tribe of Quraysh. He gained the unanimous support of the leaders of his tribe and maneuvered himself into power at a time when differences in opinion and division of loyalties prevailed.

History will never understand the cause of such a phenomenon without considering the rivalry between the Quraysh and the non-Quraysh and the muhajirun [the Emigrants] and the ansar [the Allies]. Without such an understanding, any explication of the development of Shi'ism would be nothing but a deceitful distortion. Was not the rise of Shi'ism the case of a revolt of the new over the old established order? Indeed it was. The political and economic centralism of the elders of Quraysh from the days of ignorance [jahiliyyah] was not extinguished with the arrival of Islam. The partisans of the old order mobilized against the new Islamic order established by Muhammad and embodied by 'Ali. The Quraysh defended the old order with the same drive and determination they demonstrated during the lifetime of the Prophet when the Makkan oligarchy had resisted with all their strength against Muhammad's divine and revealed message.

The ruling classes were particularly disturbed by the fact that, from the very beginning of his mission, the Messenger of Allah had rejected concepts such as social superiority, pride in ancestry and Arabism.[۳] Muhammad viewed himself, first and foremost, as an "admonisher" [nadhir] and a "guardian" of his people rather than its "king" [malik].[۴] As he put it himself, "Surely I am not a king [malik] ... I am but the son of a woman who ate dried meat" (Tirmidhi). And to the scandal of the Meccan oligarchy, he abolished all distinction between race and class with the decisive declaration that: "All human beings are equal like the teeth of a comb. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non Arab, of a non-Arab over an Arab, of a white man over a black man or of a male over a female. The only merit [in God's estimation is righteousness."[۵

In truth, the Prophet never manifested in any of his sayings or ahadith that belonging to the tribe of Quraysh or social status were necessary conditions for being elected Imam or Caliph. Abu Bakr, on the other hand, always maintained, in accord with his background, that the right to the Caliphate belonged to the members of the tribe of Quraysh by the [simple fact that they were descendants of "the most honorable Arabs."[۶

Whoever examines the Islamic accounts of the period will notice with great surprise that the Muslim sector at Saqifah proclaimed Abu Bakr as the First Caliph soon lost the esoteric and spiritual significance of the Imamate or the Caliphate, if they ever possessed it at all. For them, as we have said, spiritual authority and temporal power were united in the person of Muhammad by the fact that he was the Messenger of God and the Intercessor between God and man.[۷] When it came to Imam 'Ali, he was viewed by the old oligarchy, in the best of cases, as merely a half-Muhammad, blessed with an inspired character and the spiritual wisdom of a prophet.[۱] They did not, however, consider him fit to assume the functions of legal administrator and political leader. For the Followers of 'Ali, among whom were the closest and most famous companions of the Prophet,[۸] this separation between spiritual authority and temporal power was intolerable. It was not so much the political Imamate that 'Ali inherited from Muhammad which drew the Shi'ah. Rather, it was the esoteric sense of the prophethood that continued to pulse within him: .Imamate was the amplification of prophethood, a more interiorized complement

According to Shi'ite thought, divine guidance takes two forms: nubuwwah.[٩] The first is co-substantial to the "Muhammadan Truth" [al-haqiqah al-muhammadiyyah], in an absolute, integral, primordial, pre-eternal and post-eternal sense. The second is constituted by the partial realities of the first: its emissions and luminous epiphanies [madhar]; in other words, the Imams of the Prophetic Household who initiated and continued the "cycle of initiation" [da'irat al-nubuwwah] that was sealed by the Prophet and which, like his luminaries, are identified with the pleroma of the "Light of Light" [nur al-anwar] of the "Muhammadan Light" [al-nur al-muhammadi]. From this metaphysical point of view, the Twelve Imams belong, in their condition of luminous epiphanies of "Muhammadan Light," to the same spiritual and temporal category as the Prophet without them been truly and properly prophets.[١٠] This notion is repeated in many ahadith [traditions] in relation to 'Ali, like the one which says "You are to me as Aaron was to Moses except there will be no prophet after me" (Bukhari, Muslim, Hakim, Sadduq, [Mufid, Kulayni).[١١

The bond that exists between Muhammad and 'Ali goes far beyond that of blood. What exists between them is a special spiritual tie [nisbah ma'nawiyyah] which surpasses the relation of impossibility that "there will be no prophet after me." The bond between Muhammad and 'Ali is the result of their common pre-existence in eternity where they were two spiritual entities united in the same luminous identity. As Prophet has explained in various ahadith, "'Ali and I are from the same Light"[١٢] (Kulayni, Majlisi, Ma'sum 'Ali) "People are from various trees, but 'Ali and I are from the same Tree" (Tirmidhi, Ibn al-Maghazali).[١٣] The eminence and spiritual supremacy of the First Imam is also :established in the significant tradition in which the Prophet states

Ali has been sent secretly with every Prophet; but with me he has been sent openly"'" (Kashani qtd. in Ahmed 'Ali ١١٥٧).[١٤] It can also be seen in the tradition which states that: "Every prophet has an executor [wasi] and a successor [khalifah] and surely my executor and successor is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib" (Muttaqi, al-Baghdadi). There is also the tradition that "'Ali is part of me and I am part of 'Ali and nobody acts on my behalf except 'Ali" (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Nasa'i, Ibn Kathir, Suyuti, Sadduq, Mufid, Kulayni). In a passage from the well-known tradition of Ghadir, delivered shortly before the Prophet's death, 'Ali successorship is once again confirmed: "Oh People!" said the Prophet, "Allah granted me the wilayah [guardianship], placing me above all believers. To whom I have been the mawla [master, protector, lord and guardian], 'Ali is also his mawla [fa man kuntu [mawlahu fa 'Ali mawlahu] (Hakim, Dhahabi, Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Saduq, Mufid, Kulayni)."[١٥

In relation to this Shi'ite doctrine of the "Muhammadan Light" there is a hadith from the Prophet which affirms he and 'Ali are two identical and pre-existing lights that God manifested separately and simultaneously during the "reign" of Adam and in the hidden worlds.[١۶] After having passed from one "reign" to another they were finally placed in the persons of Hasan and Husayn who were, simultaneously, two luminous epiphanies that emanated from the "Primordial Light" through which the "Lord of the Worlds" [rab al-'alamin] illuminated all of creation through the "light of the logos" [nur al-kalam] or initial fiat lux.[١٧] This "primordial light" protects the Prophet and the Imams from sin, making them immaculate[١٨] [ma'sumin]. At the same time, it confers on them the status of supremacy of the poles [aqtab] of the universe and vicars [khalifah] of God as well as spiritual legatees [wasi] of the batin [esoteric aspects] of the scripture. As the Imams have stated, "We are the first and the last. We are the logos of God. We are the executors of the revelation."[١] As can be seen, the parallel between Moses' position and that which .Muhammad would occupy in later times becomes evident in light of these words

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It was also at this time that the Imamate was established as part and parcel of the prophethood. The true Imam and Prophet was Muhammad; and Muhammad had a successor, his Aaron, in the person of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib.[١٩] It is for this reason that Shi‘ite Muslims consider descent from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib to be an obligatory requirement for any candidate to the Caliphate along with the criteria considered necessary by Sunni Muslims. The Shi‘ite, however, differ with the Sunni in that they categorically reject election through shurah [consultative assembly]. In their eyes, the pre-Islamic process of shurah does nothing but continue the timocratic orientation of Abu Bakr and the representatives of the old Quraysh oligarchy established in Saqifah. Since Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power come from God above, it is impossible for a man to receive the sacred investiture of Imam or khalifah through a classicist covenant or a political plot between parties. The word khalifah appears twice in the Qur’an. In the first case it refers to Adam [٢: ٢٨]. In the second case, it refers to David [٣٨: ٢٥٧] with the sense of “legislator:” “We have made you a khalifah on earth,” says God to Adam, “decide among men with justice!” For Muslims, David was both a Prophet and an Imam, combining both spiritual and political authority.[٢٠] The word appears several times in the Qur’an in the plural, khulafa’ .and khala’if

The plural “caliphs” appears in contexts which, in relation to the descendants of Muhammad, can be translated as “successors” and, at times, as “inheritors,” “proprietors” and even as “vicars” and “substitutes.” The Arabic word khalifah, from which the English word “caliph” is derived, comes from a root that is found in several Semitic languages. At times, it has the meaning of “to pass on” or “to transmit.” This would make the word the equivalent of the Latin word traditio and the Greek word paradosis. In Arabic, however, the generally accepted meaning is that of “following” or “coming in place of.” By far, the most common interpretation by the majority of Sunni ‘ulama’ [scholars], with the sole exception of the Sufi Masters, is that the caliph is the vicar or successor of the Prophet. The caliph is the custodian of his moral and legal inheritance as Founder of the faith and legislator for the Islamic government and community. The caliph is not, however, in the eyes of most Sunni scholars, the successor to the spiritual office of the Prophet, the executor of his batin or the esoteric interpreter of the word of God. This interpretation, however, is inconsistent with the meaning of the word wilayah which appears to indicate that the function of the Prophet was not destined to disappear after his death but rather,

on the contrary, to continue by means of the spiritual authority and temporal power of the Imams until the end of times.

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Footnote

[١] Editor's Note: Among the Sunni Muslims, there are many traditions justifying submission and obedience to Islamic rulers, whether legitimate or illegitimate, including: "Behold, he who is ruled by a ruler who disobeys Allah, he should dislike what he commits as a disobedience to Allah but should not rise in revolt against him" (Muslim); where the Prophet is asked about rulers who deprive their subjects of their due rights and he responds "Listen to them and obey them because they are responsible for what they are ordained to do and you are responsible for what you are ordained to do" (Muslim); "Listen to the ruler and obey him" (Ahmad); "The Sultan is the shadow of Allah on earth; whosoever insults him will be humiliated by Allah, and whosoever honours him will be honoured by Him" (Albani ٤٧٥). These traditions may have been fabricated by the authorities to ensure the submission of their subjects.

[٢] Editor's Note: An elusive point but absolutely right-on. And then they built a logic to buttress what had already been done.

[٣] Editor's Note: Almighty Allah criticizes the Arab love for ancestors saying: "[C]elebrate the praises of Allah, as ye used to celebrate the praises of your fathers,--yea, with far more Heart and soul (٢:٢٠٠).

[٤] Editor's Note: As the Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: "Verily We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner" (٢:١١٩). See also ٥:١٩; ٧:١١٨; ٧:١٨٤; ١٣:٧; ٢٧:٩٢; ٣٢: ٣; ٣٣:٤٥; ٣٥:٢٣; ٤٦:٩; ٤٨:٨; ٥١:٥١; ٧٩:٤٥ and others.

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Editor's Note: This tradition, in part or in whole, is found in the following sources: Ibn [۵] Abi Hatim al-Razi's 'Ilal al-hadith, al-Bayhaqi's Sunan, Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah, Kulayni's al-Kafi, as well as Daylami, as cited in 'Ajluni's Kashf al-Khafa', among many .others

Editor's Note: The Prophet, however, had stressed repeatedly that Islam had come to [۶] .destroy class privilege

Editor's Note: We would argue that the Companions of the Prophet were divided into [۷] two groups: one group, led by 'Ali, accepted the Messenger of Allah as both a spiritual and temporal leader. The other group led by Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman accepted him as a spiritual leader, but not as a temporal, political leader. In that area, they felt their opinions were equally valid. This would account for the numerous instances of insolence and .outright insubordination coming from a certain sector of the sahabas

Editor's Note: The Prophet said of 'Ali: "He who wants to see Noah in his determination, [۸] Adam in his knowledge, Abraham in his clemency, Moses in his intelligence and Jesus in his religious devotion should look at 'Ali ibn Abu Talib" (Ahmad, Bayhaqi, al-Hadid, Razi, Ibn Batah). In Hayat al-qulub, Majlisi relates a similar tradition in which Muhammad says: "let him who pleases look to Adam for his glory, to Shays for his wisdom, to Idris and his nobleness, to Nuh and his thanksgiving and devotion, to Ibrahim and his fidelity and friendship, to Musa and his hostility to the enemies of God, to 'Isa and His love and familiarity with every believer, and then let him look to 'Ali ibn Abu Talib" (١٧٠-٧١). Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman all called upon 'Ali's expertise in legal matters during their (respective reigns as Caliph (see Mufid, Chapter V

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Editor's Note: The Shi'ah of 'Ali from among the Companions of the Prophet included all [٩] the Banu Hashim, Hudhayfah b. al-Yaman, Khuzaymah b. Thabit, whom the Prophet called Dhu al-Shahadatayn, the one with two testimonies, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Sahl b. Hunayf, Uthman b. Hunayf, al-Bara' b. 'azib al-Ansari, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Abu Dharr b. Jundab al-Ghifari, 'Ammar b. Yasir, al-Miqdad b. 'Amr, Salman al-Farisi, Khalid b. Sa'id, Jabir b. 'Abdullah al-Ansari, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Bilal b. Arwah, Miqdad ibn al-Aswad and Muhammad b. Abu Bakr. Umm Salamah, a pious wife of the Prophet, was also among the followers of 'Ali. These and people like them among the emigrants and the Ansar, all these maintained that he was the successor [khalifah] of the Messenger of Allah, and the Imam. For the Shi'ah of 'Ali, see S.H.M. Jafri, The Origins and Early Development of Shi'ah Islam (Qum: Ansariyan, ١٩٨٩): ٥١-٥٣; and Muhammad al-Tijani, Then I was Guided ٢nd ed. (Beirut: N.P, ١٩٨٩): ١۶١; Shaykh al-Mufid, Kitab al-irshad: The Book of Guidance into the .Lives of the Twelve Imams, Trans. I.K.A. Howard (London: Muhammadi Trust, ١٩٨١): ٢

Editor's Note: In the previous versions of this study, the author explained that: "In [١٠] Shi'ite thought there exists an absolute prophethood [nubuwwah mutlaqah] which is common and universal and a partial prophethood [muqayyadah] which is determined and limited by time." However, as was kindly pointed out by Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, the division of nubuwwah into mutlaqah and muqayyadah is unknown in mainstream Twelver Shi'ah writings. In fact, such a concept contradicts the concept of khitamiyyah, the finality of nubuwwah and risalah of the Prophet Muhammad. The division of prophethood into "absolute" and "partial" was drawn by the author from the works of Henry Corbin who may have taken it from Isma'ili sources. As this concept is erroneous, the author has .retracted them

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Editor's Note: Shi'ite scholars hold that the Imams are equal to Muhammad in all [۱۱] regards with the exception of prophecy. Furthermore, the majority of Shi'ite scholars .believe that the Imams are superior to all prophets, with the exception of Muhammad

Editor's Note: The Messenger of Allah also said that: "The flesh of 'Ali is from my flesh, [۱۲] and his blood is from my blood, and he holds the same position in relation to me as Aaron .(held in relation to Moses" (Ahmad

Editor's Note: In another tradition, Imam 'Ali says that: "Ahmad [Muhammad] and I are [۱۳] of one Light. The only difference between my light and his is that one preceded the other in time" (Shahrastani ۲:۲۲۶). Another version of this tradition relates that "Muhammad and I are of one light, which by Allah's command was split in two halves. To the one half Allah .(said, 'Be Muhammad,' and to the other, 'Be 'Ali'" (al-Yamani ۱۲۷

Editor's Note: Likewise, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq relates that the Prophet said: "I am the [۱۴] root of the good tree; 'Ali ibn Abi Talib is its trunk; the divinely chosen ones of the descendants of 'Ali are its branches; and the faithful ones attached to the ahl al-bayt are .(its leaves" (qtd. in Ahmed 'Ali ۸۲۰

Editor's Note: Similarly, al-Hajj Ma'sum 'Ali reports in his Tara'iq al-haqa'iq that Imam [۱۵] 'Ali said that: "I am Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, assuming different forms, however I will. He who has seen me has seen them all" (۷:۴۳). In another tradition related by Jabir al-Jufi, Imam 'Ali proclaims that: "I am the Messiah, who heals the blind and the leper, who created the birds and dispersed the stormclouds. I am he, and he is I...Jesus the Son of Mary is part of me, and I am part of him. He is the supreme Word of Allah. He is the witness testifying to the mysteries and I am that to which he testifies" (Yaman ۸-۹). The Messenger of Allah is reported to have said that "I am all the prophets" (Majlisi) a tradition widely quoted by the Baha'i. The statements quoted from Ma'sum 'Ali and Jufi, however, would not be accepted by mainstream Shi'ah Ithna-'Ashariyyah scholars as .they sound, at face value, very similar to the ideas of the ghulat

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Editor's Note: The tradition ends with the Messenger of Allah imploring: "O Allah, love [۱۶] those who love 'Ali and hate those that hate him."[۱] Editor's Note: The Messenger of Allah said: "I was a Prophet while Adam was still between the water and the clay" (Moosa ۶۱); "I was the first man in the creation and the last one in the Resurrection" (۵۴); "The first thing which Allah created was my soul (۶۰);" "My soul was the Primal Element" (۴۶); "Myself and 'Ali were created one light, and we ascribed glory to Allah on the right side of the empyrean two thousand years before Allah formed Adam" (Majlisi, Hayat al-qulub ۴). For .more on the pre-existence of the Muhammadan Logos, see Moosa ۵۴-۵۹

Editor's Note: As Imam al-Sadiq has said "Allah does not accept to appoint to it [the [۱۷] Imamate] two brothers after al-Hasan and al-Husayn" (Kulayni ۱:۲, ۳۴۱: hadith ۷۵۳). As Imam al-Sadiq explains in another tradition, "The Imamate will never be diverted between two brothers after al-Hasan and al-Husayn; it proceeds from 'Ali ibn al-Husayn... There was no-one after 'Ali ibn al-Husayn except that it went to the next .(descendant or the next descendant of the next descendant" (۳۴۰: hadith ۷۵۲

,Editor's Note: According to 'Allamah Sadduq [۱۸]

Our belief concerning the prophets [anbiyya'], messengers [rusul], Imams and angels is that they are infallible [ma'sum]; purified from all defilement [danas], and that they do not commit any sin whether it be minor [saghirah] or major [kabirah]. They do not disobey Allah in what He has commanded them; they act in accordance with His behests. He who denies infallibility to them in any matter appertaining to their status is ignorant of them, .[and such a one is a kafir [unbeliever

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Our belief concerning them is that they are infallible and possess the attributes of perfection, completeness and knowledge, from the beginning to the ends of their careers. Defects [naqs] cannot be attributed to them, nor disobedience [‘isyan], nor ignorance ([jahl], in any of their actions [ahwal]. (۱۴۰-۱۴۱

As Imam Khumayni explains, “The quality of ‘ismah that exists in the prophets is the result of belief. Once one truly believes, it is impossible for one to sin” (Islam and Revolution ۳۷۴). The Shi‘ite belief in the sinlessness of the Prophets and Imams is uniquely Shi‘ite and without a trace of Jewish or Christian influence (Donaldson ۳۳۰-۳۸). The‘ismah of the prophets is accepted by Sunnis to a limited extent and was developed under Shi‘ite .(influence (Fyzee ۹۹). The Zaydis do not accept the concept of ‘ismah (Moosa ۹۸

Editor’s Note: This tradition seems to be an echo of Revelation ۲۲:۱۳: “I am Alpha and [۱۹] Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” It ressembles Khutbat al-bayan, the Manifestation Speech, in which to ‘Ali allegedly says: “I am the Face and the Side of Allah, I am the Beginning and the End, I am the Outward [zahir] and the Inward [batin]” (al-Amuli ۱۳۴۸, fols ۵a). The speech, however, is spurious. In his Kashf al-zunun, Hajji Khalifah refers to the seventy phrases reportedly used by ‘Ali to describe his excellence as “seventy words of falsehood” (Moosa ۱۸۰). The speech is not even recorded in Shi‘ite books of hadith (۱۷۹). Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khu‘i was asked: “What is your opinion about Khutbat al-bayan that is attributed to Imam ‘Ali?” He responded that: “It has no foundation” (http://www.shiachat.com /forum/index. php?s=cb۵۵e۲e۵۵۴۹c۰۹۷۳a۰f۱۸ad۱۲۸۸a۸۸f۰showtopic= ۲۵۹۸۰). Despite the fact that, from the point of view of chains of narration, the Sermon of Manifestation is spurious, some Shi‘ite mystics accept it as authentic from a philosophical and spiritual sense. According to some scholars, it is not ‘Ali who is speaking the the Manifestation Speech but al-insan al-kamil, the Perfect Person. According to others, the Manifestation Speech is actually a hadith qudsi [sacred saying] and it is Almighty Allah who is speaking. For more on the Perfect .Person, see chapter five of our Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon

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The spiritual status and authority of the Imams is expressed in the following trustworthy :traditions

When the pledge of allegiance was made to ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Commander of the Faithful, for the Caliphate, he went out to the mosque wearing the turban and cloak of the Messenger of Allah, and giving admonition and warning, he sat down confidently, knitted :his fingers together and placed them on his stomach. He then said

Question me before you lose me. Question me, for I have the knowledge of those who came earlier and those who will come later. If the cushion [on which a judge sits] was folded for me [to sit on], I could give judgment to the people of the Torah by their Torah, to the people of the Gospel by their Gospel, to the people of the Psalms by their Psalms and to the people of the Furqan [ie. Qur’an] by their Furqan, so that each one of these books will be fulfilled and will declare, ‘O Lord, indeed ‘Ali has given judgment according to Your decree.’ By Allah, I know the Qur’an and its interpretation [better] than anyone who claims knowledge of it. If it were not for one verse in the Book of Allah, Most High, I would .be able to inform you of what will be until the Day of Resurrection

:Then he said

Question me before you lose me, for by Him Who split the seed and brought the soul into being, if you questioned me about [it] verse by verse, I would tell you of the time of its revelation and why it was revealed, I would inform of the abrogating [verse] and the abrogated, of the specific and general, the clearly defined and the ambiguous, of the Meccan and the Medinan. By Allah, there is not a party who can lead astray or guide until the Day of Resurrection, without me knowing its leader, the one who drives it forward (and the one who urges it on. (Mufid ۲۱-۲۲; Kulayni

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:Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq used to say

Our knowledge is of what will be [ghabir], of what is past [madbur], of what is marked in hearts [naksh fi al-qulub], and what is tapped into ears [naqr fí al-asma‘]. We have the read case [jafr], the white case, and the scroll of Fatimah, peace be upon her, and we .have [the document called] al-jami‘ah in which is everything the people need

:He was asked to explain these words and he said

Ghabir is knowledge of what will be; madbur is knowledge of what was; what is marked in the hearts [naksh fí al-qulub] is inspiration; and what is tapped into the ears [naqr fí al-asma‘] are words of angels; we hear their speech but we do not see their forms. The red case [jafr] is a vessel in which are the weapons of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family. It will never leave us until the one [destined] among us Members of the House [ahl al-bayt] to arise [qa’im], arises. The white case [jafr] is a vessel in which are the Torah of Moses, the Gospel of Jesus, the Psalms of David and the [other] Books of Allah. The scroll of Fatimah, peace be upon her, has in it every even which will take place and the names of all the rulers until the [last] hour comes. [The document called] al-jami‘ah is a scroll seventy yards long which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family, dictated from his own mouth and ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, wrote in his own handwriting. By Allah, in it is everything which people need until the end of time, including even the blood-wit for wounding, and whether a [full] flogging or half a (flogging [is due]. (Mufid ۴۱۴; Kulayni

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:The Prophet said of ‘Ali

You can hear what I hear and see what I see, but you are not a prophet; you are a wazir” (and you are well off” (Nahj al-balaghah, ed. ‘Abd al-Hamid ۲: ۱۸۲-۸۳

:Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq used to say

My traditions are my father’s traditions; my father’s traditions are my grandfather’s traditions; my grandfather’s traditions are the traditions of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Commander of the Faithful; the traditions of ‘Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, are the traditions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family; and the traditions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family, are the word of (Allah, the Mighty and High. (Mufid ۴۱۴; Kulayni

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq said: “We have the tablets of Moses, peace be upon him, and we have the rod of Moses, peace be upon him. We are the heirs of prophets” (Mufid ۴۱۴-۱۵; .(Kulayni

:Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq said

I have the sword of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family. I have the standard of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family, and his breast-plate, his armor and his helmet... Indeed the victorious standard of the Messenger of Allah is with me, as are the tablets and rod of Moses. I have the ring of Solomon, the son of David, and the tray on which Moses used to offer sacrifice and I have [knowledge] of the [greatest] name [of Allah] which when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family, used to put it between the Muslims and the polytheists no arrow of the polytheists could reach the Muslims. I have the same as what the angels brought. We have the weapons in the same way that the Banu Isra‘il had the ark of the covenant. Prophecy was brought to any house in which the Ark of the Covenant was present; the Imamate will be brought to which ever of us receives the weapons. My father dressed in the armor of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and it made marks on the ground. I put it on and it was [like] it was [for my father]. The one [destined] to rise up [qa’im] from among us, will fill it [so that it fits him exactly] when he puts it on, if Allah (wishes. (Mufid ۴۱۵-۴۱۶

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Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq was asked about what the people were saying that Umm Salamah, the mercy of Allah be on her, had been handed a sealed scroll. He said: "When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, died, 'Ali, peace be upon him, inherited his knowledge, his weapons and what there was. Then that went to al-Hasan, peace be upon him, then to al-Husayn, peace be upon him." "Did it go to 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, peace be upon them, after that, then to his son and now has it come to you?" he was asked. "Yes," he replied (Mufid ۴۱۶).

[۱] Editor's Note: The author alludes to the tradition where the Messenger of Allah said to 'Ali: "You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, but there will be no prophet after me" (Bukhari, Muslim, Hakim, Sadduq, Mufid, Kulayni).

[۲۰] Editor's Note: As we read in the Qur'an, Ibrahim was also an Imam:

And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also [Imams] from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers. (۲:۱۲۴)

CHAPTER ۸

THE WILAYAH

The Wilayah:

The Spiritual and Temporal Authority

of the Imams

If we focus on the term wilayah [primacy, guide, lordship] and words related to spiritual authority and temporal power, as Ayatullah Mutahhari did in a formidable and authoritative synthesis, we note that this terminological repertoire has a very precise meaning in Shi'ite thought which is related to the idea of a unified government.[۱] Wila', walayah, wilayah, wali, mawla, are nominal forms of the verbal substantive of the trilateral root WALLA (waw-lam-alif maksourah) which has the primary meaning of "being close," from which is derived "to be at the front of," from which is derived the meanings of "government" and "governor" in the temporal and political sense of the words and

"leader" and "chosen" in the spiritual sense. The same root gives place to a series of words which denote power and authority, that is, being close to the center [wasat] of sovereignty. And the Arabic word wasat [center] gives a gamut of terms which indicate .["mediation" or "intercession" [tawassut

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Other unfamiliar terms derived from the same trilateral root waw-lam-ya are wali and mawla. Wali means “friend,” “intimate,” “close,” and with the respect to the Imams “holiness” and by extension spiritual “closeness” to the divine center. The passive participle mawla means, among other things, “one who deserves a clientele,” and more frequently “boss,” “lord,” “protector,” “tutor,” “master,” “owner” and so forth. In Shi‘ism, mawlana [our lord / our master] is used to address the Prophet and the Imams and, in Sufism, it is used to refer to the great spiritual masters like Rumi[۲] or Ibn al-‘Arabi. We have listed the various forms and verbal nouns because with the auxiliary one can better understand everything which is implied by the idea of Imamate or Caliphate and how it is .conceived in Shi‘ite thought in relation to spiritual authority and temporal power

In the time of the Prophet, the title mawla [master] had the connotation of spiritual authority and universal temporal power. The basis of any Caliphate or true government is the transcendence of its foundation, the very basis of its sovereignty, authority and legitimacy. However, with the downfall of effective power in the succession of the Caliphate, starting with Abu Bakr, the title khalifah also suffered from the same process of depreciation. After the four khulafa’ al-rashidin [Rightly-Guided Caliphs], the Caliphate ceased to have the connotation of sovereignty and, in fact, to admit the sense of effective authority. This can be seen clearly with Mu‘awiyyah, the founder of the ‘Ummayad dynasty, who considered himself the “first king [malik]” of Islam.[۳] He is responsible for losing the effective [spiritual] authority of the Caliphate and diminishing the meaning of many titles which, in the early days, were exclusive Caliphal prerogatives. This includes the very term khalif which, upon entering the common language, became so diluted that .any governor of Islam could claim to be the Caliph of his own dominion

Among some Sunni commentators and misinformed Orientalists, there are those who believe that when ‘Ali became the Fourth Caliph, according to the temporal and political precedence more than the spiritual, he was implicitly accepting the authority and the method of election of the previous Caliphs in that they accomplished similar political and social functions as governors and elders of the Islamic community.[۴] From a Shi‘ite perspective, it is clear that ‘Ali never accepted the Caliphate in the sense that the three .Caliphs who preceded him did

On the contrary, as Imam--in the Shi‘ite sense of spiritual and political regency as well as ta‘alim, the esoteric faculty of perfectly interpreting the intertexual mysteries of the Qur’an and the shari‘ah--‘Ali was the legitimate spiritual heir and political successor of the Prophet, something which he and his successors always insisted upon. As he explains explicitly in his letters and sermons, ‘Ali accepted the function of Caliph--in the Sunni sense of governor and legal administrator--to avoid schism while preserving the function of wilayah for himself. As Nasr says, this is how ‘Ali can simultaneously be seeing as Caliph and Imam, by both Sunnis and Shi‘ites, in accord with the different perspectives on the .(issue (see Nasr’s preface to Tabataba‘i’s Shi‘ite Islam ۱۰-۱۲

The wilayah inherently implies certain legal and political faculties. The Imam, as we have said, exercises the spiritual magistrate and the esoteric guidance of the wilayah. He also performs the function of administrator of the shari‘ah, fully interpreting its legal code and legitimately and dispensing justice through his role as perfect monarch, by the fact that he embodies spiritual authority and temporal power. The monarch [from the Greek monos, “the sole one” and arjé, “rule,” “principle”] is the “supreme sovereign,” unique and universal,” and not merely a “king” [malik] since a king only administers the temporal functions of government while the monarch is the one who rules according to the monarchy of divine right, established from above, by the mandate of God and not by .human choice

As Lord Acton, a British historian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries said, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." As human history has shown us, human lust for power can become exacerbated by its very existence. It can make man dream of limitless power, causing him to rebel against his plight, his powerless limited being. Justice and peace are then viewed as unacceptable unless they can help increase and maintain power and wealth. They are soon placed on the backburner due to innate egocentrism and worldly ambitions. This is why the Gospel refers to heads of nations as tyrants who rule like absolute sovereigns while the powerful ones oppress them with their power (Matthew ۲۰:۲۵; Mark ۱۰: ۴۲). In a divine monarchy, based on balance, .harmony, justice and peace, quite the opposite is true

On the basis of the above, it can now be understood why in Shi'ism, the sovereign authority of Imam al-Mahdi has an eminently regulating and restorative function which is proper and non-transferable. In other words, he is worthy, by divine design, of the "central" position he occupies. As an "intercessor" between heaven and earth, he is beyond the distinction between the spiritual and wordly realms of existence. The very nature of "intercessor" in the true sense of the word is quintessential to the seal of the [cycle of initiation. It is for this reason that he is referred to as the "center" [wasat].[۵

The "center" in question is the fixed point around which the world rotates. It is designated symbolically by all religious traditions as the "pole" [qutb] and is generally represented by a "wheel." The most obvious sense of this symbol is the absolute dominion over the .worldly order

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This is why Imam al-Mahdi receives the majestic titles of sahib al-zaman [Lord of the Age], al-arkan [The Pillars], al-qa'im [The Restorer], al-muntazar [The Awaited One], al-hujjah [The Proof] as well as al-qutb or the Spiritual Pole of the Age. The title of sahib al-zaman, in its most sublime sense, applies exclusively to the Mahdi. He is granted this title in virtue of his role as the primordial universal legislator who formulates the most appropriate laws in accordance with the conditions during our cycle of existence. He directs the movement of our cycle without participating in it in a visible fashion. He maintains himself simultaneously present and hidden in the world, the same as in ".Aristotle's notion of the "unmoving motor

In light of these considerations, it is understood why Imam al-Mahdi has the fundamental attributes of "Justice" and "Peace." He shares these attributes with Çakravarti, [from the Sanskrit: "he who makes the wheel turn"], the "Universal Monarch" of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions; with Wang, the "Pontiff King" of Taoism and with melki-tsedeq, the "King of Justice and Peace" of the Jewish tradition.[۶] The Invisible Imam's attributes of justice and peace are veiled forms of his spiritual functions which, by an effort of cosmic unity, are identified with earthly equilibrium and harmony. In light of these concepts, we can affirm that the Shi'ite concept of wilayah, the spiritual and temporal authority of the Imam, is the Islamic equivalent of all of these traditional notions from both East and West, including the Hellenist and Hellenist-Christian concept of the panbasileus or ."Absolute King," who was the lord of a unique and universal empire

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Imam al-Mahdi is particularly revered for his role as Executor of Prophetic Knowledge or First Intellect. At the same time, he is the Archetype of Man, the Visible and the Invisible, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega. As Henry Corbin perceived from the development of Shi'ite Prophetology, this human form in its pre-eternal glory is called Original Adam [Adam al-haqiqi], the Perfect Man [insan kamil], the Supreme Spirit and Scribe, the Absolute Caliph, and the Pole of the Poles [qutb al-aqtab].[۷] Imam al-Mahdi is also the Eternal Muhammadan Reality [haqiqah muhammadiyyah], the Light of His Glory, .His Sanctifying Virtue, His Primordial Logos or Divine Word and his Perfect Epiphany

In light of the above, we can say that in the beginning of Islam, Shi'ism, like Sufism, was a latent and nameless reality profoundly rooted in the esoteric dimension of the Qur'anic revelation.[۸] In the Islamic world, the function of Shi'ism, like that of Sufism, is similar to the human heart in the sense that the heart is the vital center of the human body as well as being, in reality, the intellectual "center" of a reality that transcends any formal determination.[۹] This "central" role of Shi'ism at the heart of the Islamic world has always, and continues to be, hidden from outside observers, who insist upon its non-Islamic origin. They insist on this theory because Shi'ite doctrine does not appear in the first centuries, particularly during the life of the Prophet, with all of the metaphysical [development that would manifest itself later on.[۱۰

From a historical perspective, Shi'ism surfaced immediately after the death of the Prophet and can be defined as "Ali's Islam" or the "Islam of Ahl al-Bayt." The emergence of Shi'ism was not merely the consequence of a political conflict related to the succession of the Prophet, although this certainly helped to precipitate the events. What is important, above all, is the "central" role that Shi'ism played in the Islamic world after the demise of the founder of Islam.[۱۱] As a continuation and a doctrinal complement to the nubuwwah, it was imperative for the wilayah to manifest itself in the world upon the completion of the .Prophetic mission

Since wilayah implies the same possibility of prolonging the spiritual leadership and the esoteric guidance of the Prophet, it cannot be superimposed on the nubuwwah as long as [the Prophet was alive.[۱۲

In other words, Shi'ite Islam, which was supposed to serve as a support for the wilayah, the spiritual and esoteric dimension of the nubuwwah, must manifest itself upon the death of the Prophet. This moment, both cosmologically and metaphysically, signals the start of the wilayah, the beginning of its temporal and exoteric manifestation. It is at that point when the wilayah [guardianship] ceases to be a latent, nameless reality, and transforms itself into a manifest and named reality. Due to its cosmological and metaphysical nature, the historical apparition of Shi'ism was meant to coincide with the .cycle of wilayah, the start of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib's earthly mission

The esoteric function of the first Imam, hidden until the moment of the Prophet's death, was meant to manifest itself in a partial opening of the Muhammadan wilayah and the seal of the universal wilayah. We can thus fully appreciate the importance of the designation [nass] of 'Ali as successor [khalifah] and executor [wasi] of the Prophet.[۱۳] 'Ali, the first link in the spiritual chain of the Imamate and the rukn or pillar of Islamic Gnosticism, represents the complementary dimension of the prophethood; his path, .Shi'ism, is a dimension of the depth found at the core of the Qur'anic message

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Footnote

Author's Note: Concerning the various implicit meanings of the technical term Wilayah [۱] and other related terms derived from the trilateral Arabic root W-L-Y, see M. Mutahhari Wala'ha wa Wilayat ha (Qum ۱۹۷۶). There is an English version by Yayha Cooper, Wilayah: The Station of the Master (Tehran ۱۹۸۲), ۲۱-۴۸. Concerning the levels of Wilayah, see D. Martin "The Return to 'The One' in the Philosophy of Najm al-Din al-Kubra" in P. .Morewedge (ed.) ۲۱۶-۲۲۲

Editor's Note: Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, author of the Masnavi was a famous Sufi poet and [۲] .founder of the whirling dervishes. He is the most widely read poet in the United States

Editor's Note: As a result of "the usurpation of rule by Mu'awiyyah from 'Ali... caused [۳] the system of rule to lose its Islamic character entirely and to be replaced by a .(monarchical regime" (Khumayni Islam and Revolution ۲۰۰

Editor's Note: As Ja'fariyan explains, [W]hen 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf laid down the [۴] condition that he would deliver the office of the caliphate to the candidate who would follow the practice [sirah] of the Shaykhayn [i.e. Abu Bakr and 'Umar] ... Imam 'Ali insisted that he would base his policy only on the Qur'an, the sirah of the Prophet and his own .[judgements [ijtihad

Editor's Note: The existence of divinely determined intercession for believers is [۵] :unquestionably Qur'anic

(Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? (۲:۲۵۵

Verily your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and is firmly established on the throne [of authority], regulating and governing all things. No (intercessor [can plead with Him] except after His leave [hath been obtained]. (۱۰:۳

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None shall have the power of intercession, but such a one as has received permission [or (promise] from [Allah] Most Gracious (۱۹:۸۷

On that Day shall no intercession avail except for those for whom permission has been (granted by [Allah] Most Gracious and whose word is acceptable to Him. (۲۰:۱۰۹

He knows what is before them, and what is behind them, and they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable, and they stand in awe and reverence of His ([Glory].(۲۱:۲۸

No intercession can avail in His Presence, except for those for whom He has granted (permission. (۳۴:۲۳

(Say: To Allah belongs exclusively [the right to grant] intercession. (۳۹:۴۴

How many-so-ever be the angels in the heavens, their intercession will avail nothing except after Allah has given leave for whom He pleases and that he is acceptable to Him. ((۵۳:۲۶

Intercession, however, is not available to unbelievers, as is clearly stated in the Qur'an (۶:۵۱; ۲:۱۲۳; ۲:۲۵۴; ۶:۷۰; ۶:۹۴; ۷:۵۳; ۱۰:۱۸; ۱۹:۸۷; ۲۶:۱۰۰; ۳۰:۳۰; ۳۲:۴; ۳۶:۲۳; ۳۹:۴۳; ۴۰:۱۸; ۴۳:۸۶; ۷۴:۴۸). Intercession is not available to those who are guilty of kufr or shirk. Almighty Allah addresses the polytheists, warning them that their partners will be unable to intercede .with them on the Day of Judgement

:According to Shaykh Sadduq

The right to intercession belongs to the prophets [anbiya'] and awliya'. And among the believers [mu'minin] also there are some who can intercede on behalf of people equal in number to the tribes of Rabi'ah and Mudar. Even the least of the believers will be liable to (intercede on behalf of ۳۰,۰۰۰. (۱۲۲

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It is narrated in Sadduq's Risalatu al-i'tiqadat, Fakhruddin b. Ahmad al-Najafi's Majma'u'l bahrayn and Hasan b. Yusuf b. 'Ali Ibnu'l Mutahar al-Hilli's al-Babu al-hadi 'ashar, that the Prophet said: "May Allah not grant my intercession to him who does not believe in my ".(power of) intercession

All of the various orthodox manifestations of Islam believe in the intercession of the Prophet and the awliya'. See Kabbani's Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrines: .http://www.sunnah. org/ibadaat/ twsl.html

The belief in intercession does not mean that there is an intermediary between human .beings and God. It is merely an extra means of attaining His mercy

.Editor's Note: The Hidden Imam is also the Philosopher King of the Greeks [۶]

Author's Note: In general, Corbin deals with this theme in his diverse works dedicated [۷] to some of the internal or esoteric currents of Shi'ism, although with slight variations. See "La filosofia islámica desde sus orígenes hasta la muerte de Averroes" in collaboration with S.H. Nasr and O. Iahia, in B. Parain, Del mundo romano al Islam medieval: Historia de la filosofía (Mexico ۱۹۷۲), III, ۲۵۳-۲۵۹; ۲۶۵-۲۶۶; Terre céleste et corps de résurrection: De l'Iran Mazdéen à l'Iran shi'ite (Correa ۱۹۶۰); ۱۰۶-۱۰۷; ۱۱۲-۱۱۵; Temples et contemplation: Essais sur l'Islam iranien (Paris ۱۹۸۰), ۷۵-۷۶; ۱۹۲-۱۹۳; ۲۲۰; ۲۴۴-۲۴۹; and Shaykh al-Mufid's .Kitab al-irshad

Editor's Note: The mystical dimension of the Holy Qur'an and teachings of the Prophet [۸] were present from the very beginning, even though they were not labeled tasawwuf, Sufism or 'irfan. To borrow Sausurrian terms, the signified exists before the signifier. Imam 'Ali was criticized by some Companions of the Prophet for speaking of things which had never been spoken before by the Prophet. The Imam responded with a reference to the Qur'an that "Prophets speak to the people in the language of the people." It was the obligation of the Prophet to teach the fundamentals of faith and the outer dimensions of the religion. It was the obligation of the Imams to expound upon in their inner dimensions. As the Messenger of Allah said: "There is among you a person who will fight for the interpretation of the Qur'an just as I fought for its revelation." He then indicated that it was 'Ali (Ahmad, Hakim, Bayhaqi, Abu Na'im, Muttaqi). It is regrettable that a scholar of the caliber of Ayatullah al-Uzma Shaykh Fazel Lankarani has rejected mysticism ruling

that "Sufism, in the eyes of Shi'ism, in general, [as well as] Islamically, has no religious basis, and there is no sign of it in the teachings of the Prophet" (http://www.lankarani.net/English/faq/en.htm). This was the very attitude addressed by Imam Khumayni in Islam :and Revolution where he laments that

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We find some scholars…denying the validity of mysticism and thus depriving themselves of a form of knowledge. It is regrettable... Those who wear cloaks and turbans and denounce the mystics as unbelievers do not understand what they are saying; if they did, .(they would not denounce them" (۴۲۳-۴۲۴

Merely because the words sufi and ‘arif are not found in the Islamic texts of the first century Hijrah does not signify that mysticism and Gnosis did not exist. They did in fact exist under the general umbrella of ‘ilm [knowledge]. As official institutionalized Islam became increasingly legalistic and focused on the exoteric foundations of the faith, the adherents of its mystical and esoteric dimension needed to distinguish themselves by calling their science ‘irfan and by designating themselves as Sufis (Awani ۱۶۹). All prophets were mystics as were their faithful followers. The first paragons of Sufism were the ashab al-sufah, the Companions of the Ledge, about whom Surah ۱۸:۲۸ was revealed (۱۷۰). They included such distinguished companions as Salman, Abu Dharr and ‘Ammar al-Yasir (۱۷۰). The early Sufis were called zuhhad or ascetics, many of whom were associated with Shi‘ite Imams (۱۷۰). Among the companions of ‘Ali were found spiritual figures and ascetics like Kumayl and Maytham al-Tammar (۱۷۰). In his Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism, Massignon shows that Islamic mystics or ruhaniyyah have existed since the dawn of Islam. Islamic mysticism is clearly based on the practice of the Prophet, the Imams and their Companions and is directly derived from the Qur’an and the Sunnah, both of which are oceans of mystical :manifestations. As Awani observes

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The hadith literature in Shi'ism and the anthologies of the hadiths handed down from the Imams are the veritable mines of Islamic gnosis. The Usul al-kafi of Kulayni and the other compendia of Shi'i hadith are real treasures of 'irfan... Moreover, the Shi'i prayers and litanies found in al-Sahifah al-sajadiyyah of the fourth Imam...is the best exposition and representation of Islamic gnosis. Some Shi'i prayers, like Da'wah sha'baniyyah, Du'a' 'Arafah, and Du'a' Kumayl highlight the highest themes of Islamic gnosis. Shi'i prayer books are replete with ritual formulae for acts of superrogation [nawafil] also much emphasized in Sufism and sometimes with identical formulations. The ritual invocation of the Beautiful Divine Names is the focus of emphasis in both Shi'ism and Sufism. For example, Du'a' Jawshan kabir, found in Shi'i prayer books contains one thousand divine names and is recited by pious Shi'i on many occasions and a least once a week. Some identical formulae based directly and indirectly on the verses of the Qur'an are reiterated in both. The Shi'i canonical books of hadith are filled with themes which can be made the object of meditation and contemplation and which can find their true explanation in real ('irfan. (١٧۴

,As Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi explains

The points which can be found among the narrations attributed to the Noble Prophet and Pure Imams, may Allah bless all of them, and in their supplications and intimate devotions .related to the above topics ['irfan, Sufism, hikmah] are uncountable

A religion without mysticism would not be a religion. As Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi explains, gnosis is not only a part of Islam, but the kernel and spirit of it which comes from the Qur'an and prophetic Sunnah, just as the other parts of Islam. It would be a dry carcass and an empty shell. As Awani explains, "esoterism in each religion, which constitutes its core and kernel, is an integral part of that religion without which it cannot be a religion to start with;" "esoterism is the sine qua non of every religion, without which the religion would lose its vertical dimension and would be reduced to a horizontal and mundane level" (١٧٢). Sufism is not an extraneous accretion super added to Islam ... it is its esoteric or inward aspect [batin] as distinguished from the exoteric or external aspect [zahir]" (١٧١-٧٢). It is safe to say that "Sufism is totally based upon the Holy Qur'an, the sunnah of the .(Prophet, and the Household ['Itrah]" (١٧٢

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Besides Ayatullahs Muhammad Taqi al-Behjat, 'Izz al-Din Husayni Zanjani, Sayyid Mirza 'Ali Tabataba'i, Jawadi Amuli, Lutfullah al-Safi al-Gulpaygani, Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Shahabadi, Muhammad Husayn al-Burujerdi, Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i, Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, among many others, the mystical dimensions of Islam have also been fully appreciated by Ayatullahs Khumayni, Tabataba'i and Mutahhari who left us their interiorized insights in Light Within Me which is also available in an excellent Spanish translation titled Luz interior. 'Allamah Tabataba'i was a specialist in exegesis, mysticism and philosophy while Ayatullah Mutahhari was an expert in both Eastern and Western thought. Imam Khumayni has also left us his Forty Hadith: An Exposition of Ethical and Mystical Traditions, which has been partly translated into English, as well as a beautiful body of mystical poetry. The greatness of Imam Khumayni was that, like the Prophet, he established equilibrium between the exoteric and the esoteric, between the worldly and the spiritual, and between religion and politics. He was able to function on various levels. Scholars like Khumayni, who are jurists, exegetes, mystics, philosophers, sociologists and poets, are few and hard to find. As Murata observes, "[o]ne of the most unfortunate signs of the contemporary malaise of the Islamic world is that the intellectual authorities have all but disappeared from the scene, while the jurists have a free hand to say what they want" (۳).

[۹] Editor's Note: For the Arabs, Aztecs and Incas, the heart is the center of human intellect and spirituality. For them, reasoning is related to feelings and emotions. In the Western world, the intellect resides in the mind.

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Editor's Note: The Imams inherited and enriched Islam. As Fyzee observes, "it is not [۱۰] possible to dismiss contemptuously the possibility of the personal religious tradition of the Prophet, at least in some important matters, being carefully handed down to the Imams of the House of the Prophet, the people who undoubtedly had the best opportunity of knowing the true interpretation of many a principle of Islam" (۴). As Nasr explains, "The sayings of the Imams are in many ways not only a continuation but also a kind of commentary and elucidation of the prophetic hadith, often with the aim of bringing out the esoteric teachings of Islam" (A Shi'ite Anthology ۷). As Algar observes, "the Imams inherited from the Prophet a certain body of teaching concerning the interpretation of the Qur'an, which they enriched as they transmitted it" (Khumayni Islamic Revolution ۴۲۷ note .(۷

Editor's Note: Islam teaches that God sent ۱۲۴,۰۰۰ prophets since the time of Adam. [۱۱] Every tribe and nation received a prophet. The fundamental teachings of these prophets were the same: belief in One God, belief in the prophets and messengers of God, belief in the Day of Judgment, belief in the Hereafter, promote the good and forbid the wrong. Islam accepts all past prophets, including Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. In Islamic thought, Judaism was the one true religion, followed by Christianity and finally followed by Islam. In essence, Islam embraces all revealed religions, all of which taught islam or "submission" to God's will. When the author says that Muhammad was the founder of the Islamic religion, he expresses a limited truth. In the universal order of things, all revealed religions were "Islam" and the Islamic religion is merely its final and complete .manifestation

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Editor's Note: It is related in al-Kafi that Imam al-Sadiq was asked whether there [۱۲] could be two Imams [at one time] to which he responded: "No, except in the case of one ([of them] being silent" (Kulayni ۳۵: hadith ۴۴۷

Editor's Note: The appointment of 'Ali as Imam was co-dependent on the [۱۳] appointment of Muhammad as Messenger and an intrinsic aspect of the Divine Message. After receiving the revelation, the Prophet gathered the Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib in order to make the following solemn pledge: "Whoever helps me in this matter will be my brother, my testamentary trustee [wasi], my helper [wazir], my heir and my successor after me." 'Ali stood before the gathering and he said: "O Messenger of Alláh, I will help you." Then the Prophet said: "Sit down, you are my brother, my trustee, my helper, my inheritor, and successor after me" (Sadduq, Mufid, Kulayni). This event is recorded in Guillaume's rendition of Sirat Rasul Allah by Ibn Ishaq, the oldest extant biography on the life of the Prophet, where we read that the Messenger of Allah laid his hand on the back of 'Ali 's neck and said: "This is my brother, my executor, and my successor among you. Hearken to him and obey him" [Inna hadha akhi wa wasiyyi wa khalifati fikum, fasma' u lahu wa ati'uhu]. It is also recorded by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abu Hatim, Ibn Marduwayh, Abu Na'im, Imam Bayhaqi, Tha'labi and Tabari (Musawi ۱۵۲). It appears in Ibn 'Asakir, Suyuti, 'Ala'uddin al-Shafi'i, al-Hasakani, al-Muttaqi al-Hindi; Abu al-Fida, and Haykal. It is related in somewhat different words by Ibn 'Athir, Imam Abu Ja'far al-Iskafi Mu'tazali, Halabi, Tahawi, al-Maqdasi, Sa'id ibn Mansur, Ahmad, Nasa'i, Hakim, Dhahabi and many others (Musawi ۱۵۲-۵۴). It is also recorded by many orientalists including T. Carlyle, E. Gibbon, J. Davenport and W. Irving. This event is conveniently suppressed from some Sunni biographies of the Prophet. While the second line of the Prophet appeared in the first Arabic edition of Hasan Haykal's Life of Muhammad, it has been deleted in the second editions and those which have followed. For more on Haykal's censorship, see Chapter ۲ of Rizvi's Shi'ism: Imamate and Wilayah. There are a multitude of other traditions in which .the Messenger of Allah explicitly appoints 'Ali as his heir and successor

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CHAPTER ٩

THE IMAMATE

:The Imamate

The Esoteric Inheritance or the Batin of the Prophet

To sum up the political aspects of Islamic history, it is clear that the Caliphate is transmitted by way of nass through which the Prophet or the Imam designates who will succeed him in the Imamate.[١] The Imam is the sole expert of the inner sense of the Scripture and the Sunnah. This exclusive knowledge was passed directly from the Prophet to 'Ali and through him to his Descendants.[٢] The Imam is thus the definitive authority on religion obligations [wajibat / furud] and the esoteric interpretation [tafsir] of the shari'ah [Islamic law]. Furthermore, the Imam possesses the quality of 'ismah, infallibility and impeccability.[٣] The controversial and contentious issue of the succession of the Prophet, disputed by Sunnis and Shi'ites for over a millennium, can never be understood if the essentially esoteric function of the Imamate, as a prolongation and complement to the prophethood, is overlooked. The issue of the Imamate is more than an abstract question. It is the legitimate expression of Muhammadan spiritual authority and temporal power. It is a concrete existential reality which needed to manifest itself in .the world to continue expounding the batin [esoteric aspect] of the prophethood

For Shi'ites, the completion of the "cycle of prophethood" [da'irat al-nubuwwah] marks the beginning of the "cycle of initiation" [da'irat al-wilayah]. For metaphysical and cosmological reasons, the cycle of wilayah was to be opened through its own "door" [al-bab], 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, due to his role as "spiritual successor" [khalifah ruhani] and "executer" [wasi] of the Prophet's batin [secrets] or initiator into the Muhammadan mysteries. This is why the Imamate is not merely a question of blood ties to the Prophet.[٤] The issue is not the degree of relation with him, be it wives, daughters, grandchildren, sons-in-law or parents-in-law. On the contrary, the worldly family union is the result of the pleremátic unity of the nubuwwah [prophethood] and the wilayah .[[guardianship

As Corbin senses, the concept of the Imams can only be understood if one considers them as divine luminaries and pre-cosmic entities.[۵] They themselves affirmed so during the course of their worldly existence. Many traditions to this effect were gathered by al-Kulayni in his voluminous compilation al-Kafi.[۶]

They stress the fact that the Prophet and the Imam are from the same essence and the same light[۷] and what is said of one is applicable to any one of the twelve.[۸]

Shi'ite gnosis enables us to understand the importance of the situation and exactly what was on the line with the Caliphate.[۹] By the political substitution of Abu Bakr for 'Ali, the organic link between the dahir [exoteric] and the batin [esoteric] was temporarily broken. In Sunnism, this led to the development of a legalistic religion, based on a purely juristic interpretation of Islam.[۱۰] It was thus left to Sufi and Shi'ite Islam to preserve, in their exoteric practices and doctrines, the lost esoteric equilibrium.

Footnote

[۱] Editor's Note: The nass or appointment of 'Ali and the succeeding Imams is one of the issues stressed by Shaykh Mufid in Kitab al-irshad.

[۲] Editor's Note: As Imam al-Sadiq explains, "'Ali was a man of knowledge, and knowledge is inherited. And a man of knowledge never dies unless another one remains after him who knows his knowledge" (al-Kafi, ۱۵۶: hadith ۵۹۰). Imam al-Rida wrote in a letter that "Muhammad was Allah's custodian over His creatures. When he was taken, we, the Household, were his inheritors" (۱۶۰, hadith ۵۹۸).

".Editor's Note: 'Ismah may also be translated as "a state of sinlessness [۳]

Editor's Note: There can be no monarchy in Islam as can be seen in Imam Khumayni's [۴] "The Incompatibility of Monarchy with Islam," Islam and Revolution (Berkely: Mizan P, ۱۹۸۱): ۲۰۰-۲۰۸. The Imamate was given to those appointed by Allah, and was not necessarily from father to eldest son. As Imam al-Sadiq explains "Do you think that he who appoints a successor from among us, appoints anyone he wishes? No, by Allah, indeed it is a covenant from the Messenger of Allah to one man after another, until it comes down to the one who is entrusted with it" (Kulayni ۱:۲, IV, ۳۲۰: hadith ۷۳۹). In another hadih he explains that "The Imamate is a covenant from Allah, to Whom belong Might and .(Majesty, which is entrusted to men who are named" (۳۲۰: hadith ۷۳۸

Editor's Note: As Nasr explains, "Shi'ism believes that there is a 'Primordial Light' [۵] passed from one prophet to another and after the Prophet of Islam to the Imams. This light protects the prophets and Imams from sin, making them inerrant [ma'sum], and bestows upon them the knowledge of divine mysteries" (Sufi Essays ۱۱۱). 'Allamah Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi lists numerous traditions concerning this "Primordial Light" and how it was passed down from the prophets, to Muhammad and then to the Imams :(see chapters ۱ and ۲ of Hayat al-qulub). According to Imam Khumayni

T]he Most Noble Messenger and the Imams existed before the creation of the world in] the form of lights situated beneath the divine throne; they were superior even in the sperm from which they grew and in their physical composition. Their exalted station is limited only by the divine will, as indicated by the saying of Jibra'il recorded in the traditions on the mi'raj: "Were I to draw closer by as much as the breadth of a finger, surely I would burn." The Prophet himself said: "We have states with God that are beyond the reach of the cherubim and the prophets." It is part of our belief that the Imams too (enjoy similar states... (Islam and Revolution ۶۴-۶۵

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Concerning these attributes of the Imams, see Henry Corbin, Histoire de la philosophie .islamique (Paris, ۱۹۶۴): ۷۷ ff

It is recorded in al-Kafi that Imam al-Sadiq was asked about the verse: "Therefore, believe in Allah and His Messenger and in the Light which we have sent down" to which he :responded

The Light, by Allah, is the Light of the Imams from the Household of Muhammad till the Day of Resurrection. They, by Allah, are the Light which Allah has sent down, and they, by (Allah, are the Light of Allah in the heavens and on the earth." (Kulayni I۸۰: hadith ۵۱۴

In Lantern of the Path, Imam al-Sadiq relates a fascinating tradition on the authority of :Salman al-Farsi in which the Messenger of Allah explains that

Allah created me from the quintessence of light, and called me, so I obeyed Him. Then he created 'Ali from my light, and called him, and he obeyed. From my light and the light of 'Ali He created Fatimah. He called her and she obeyed. From me, 'Ali and Fatimah, He created al-Hasan and al-Husayn. He called them and they obeyed Him. Allah has named us with five of His names: Allah is al-Mahmud [the Praised] and I am Muhammad [praisworthy]; Allah is al-'Ali [the High], and this is 'Ali [the one of high rank]; Allah is al-Fatir [Creator out of nothing], and this is Fatimah; Allah is the One with Ihsan [beneficence], and this is Hasan; Allah is Muhassin [the Beautiful] and this is Husayn [the beautiful one]. He created nine Imams from the light of al-Husayn and called them and they obeyed Him, before Allah created either Heaven on high, the out-stretched earth, the air, the angels or man. We were lights who glorified Him, listened to Him and obeyed .Him

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In The Origins and Development of Shi'ah Islam, Jafri questions the authenticity of the traditions describing the Imams as supernatural human beings and the miracles attributed to them (۳۰۰, ۳۰۳). Miracles and mysticism are clearly incompatible with his training as a historian. He holds that "a great many traditions ascribing supernatural and superhuman characteristics to the Imams, propounded by semi-ghulat circles in Kufa, crept into Shi'i literature" (۳۰۳). He therefore dismisses the traditions concerning the light of Allah in 'Ali and the description of the Imams as the "shadows of light" and "luminous bodies" (۳۰۲). Shi'ite scholars, however, have always shown the greatest aversion towards ghuluw [extremism] and would not have accepted traditions from ghulat or even semi-ghulat sources. Shi'ite fuqaha' [jurists] are unanimous in their takfir [declaration of :infidelity] of the ghulat (Khu'i ۲۸; Gulpaygani ۳۰ et al.). As Shaykh Sadduq says

Our belief concerning those who exceed the bounds of belief [ghal, pl. ghulat] and those who believe in delegation [al-mufawwidah] is that they are deniers [kuffar] of Allah, Glory be to His name. They are more wicked than the Jews, the Christians, the Fire-Worshippers, the Qadarites or the Kharijites, or any of the heretics [ahl al-bid'ah] or those (who holds views which lead astray [al-ahwa' al-mudillah]. (۱۴۱-۱۴۲

While Jafri may believe that excessively zealous Shi'ites exaggerated the status of the Imams, turning them into divine luminaries, what accounts for the presence of similar traditions in Sunni and Sufi sources? In 'Abd al-Rahman Sulami's (d. ۱۰۲۱) famous compilation of the Qur'an titled Haqa'iq al-tafsir, we find an exegesis of Surah ۲:۳۷ which is startling for a Sunni source. In interpreting the verse "and Allah taught Adam the names," Sulami quotes a tradition from Imam Ja'far to the effect that: "Allah existed before His creation existed. He created five creatures from the light of His Glory and gave each one a name from among His Names: Being the Praised One [mahmud], He called His Prophet, Muhammad; being the Most High ['ali], He called the Leader of the Believers, 'Ali; being the Creator [fatir] of the heavens and the earth, he forged the name Fatimah; and since he has the most beautiful names [husna], He forged two names for Hasan and .Husayn

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He then placed them to the right of His Throne…" The traditions in question are numerous and widely recorded. We are not dealing with isolated traditions with weak chains of .narrations [sanad] which can easily be dismissed

Author's Note: See al-Kulayni, al-Kafi (Karachi ۱۹۶۵). There is also a more recent edition [۱] .((Tehran ۱۴۰۰/۱۹۸۰

Editor's Note: al-Kafi fi 'ilm al-din [The Sufficient in the Knowledge of Religion] is one of the "Four (Fundamental) Books" of the Shi'ites. The others include Man la yahduruhu al-faqih [For him not in the Presence of a Jurisprudent] by Shaykh al-Sadduq Muhammad ibn Babawayh al-Qummi (d. ۳۸۱/۹۹۱), Tahdhib al-ahkam (Rectification of the Statutes) by Shaykh Muhammad al-Tusi (d. ۴۶۰/۱۰۶۸) and al-Istibsar fi ma ukhtulifa fihi min al-akhbar .(Reflection upon the Disputed Traditions) also by al-Tusi

Editor's Note: It is related that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir said that "The first beings [۷] that Allah created were Muhammad and his family, the rightly guided ones and the .(guides; they were the phantoms of light before Allah" (Kulayni ۱: ۲۷۹

Editor's Note: The Messenger of Allah said of his Holy Household: "We are exactly the [۸] same as regards command, understanding, and what is lawful and what is unlawful" ,(Kulayni ۳۱۴: hadith ۷۲۸). As Nasr explains

The Imams are like a chain of light issuing forth from the "Sun of Prophecy" which is their origin, and yet they are never separated from that Sun. Whatever is said by them emanates from the same inviolable treasure of inspired wisdom. Since they are an extension of the inner reality of the Blessed Prophet, their words really go back to him. That is why their sayings are seen in the Shi'ite perspective as an extension of the prophetic hadith, just as the light of their being is seen as a continuation of the prophetic light. In Shi'ite eyes, the temporal separation of the Imams from the Blessed Prophet does not at all affect their essential and inner bond with him or the continuity of the "prophetic light" which is the source of him as well as their inspired knowledge. (A Shi'ite (Anthology ۶-۷

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Editor's Note: The office of the Imamate and Caliphate was meant, by divine design, to [۹] function as the Government of God on earth. The Prophet has said that: "He, who denies 'Ali his Imamate after me, verily denies my prophethood [nubuwwah]. And he who denies my prophethood has denied Allah His divinity" (Saduq ۱۰۷). He also stated that "The Imams after me are twelve, the first of them is the Prince of Believers 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and the last of them is the Mahdi [rightly-guided], the Qa'im [the upholder of the true religion]; obedience to them is obedience to me and disobedience to them is disobedience to me; and who denies one of them has verily denied me" (۱۰۸). Imam al-Sadiq has said that: "He who denies the last among us is like him who denies the first among us" (۱۰۸). The following tradition from Imam al-Sadiq illustrates what is at stake when the authority :of ahl al-bayt is forsaken

We are those obedience to whom Allah has made an obligation. Nothing is proper for the people except to know, nor are the people absolved from being ignorant about us. He who knows us is a believer, and he who denies us is an unbeliever. He who neither knows us nor denies us is misguided, till he returns to the path of guidance, which Allah has made an obligation for him as a binding obligation to us. If he dies in misguidance, Allah will do (with him whatever he pleases. (Kulayni ۶۰ hadith ۴۸۹

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The Imam has also issued the following firm warning: "Whoever dies without having known and acknowleged the Imam of his Age dies as an infidel" (Kulayni I ٣١٨). Recognition of the Imam is an absolute duty of every believer. Loving the Household of the Prophet is mandatory. As we read in the Holy Qur'an: "No reward do I ask of you for .(this except the love of those near of kin" (٤٢:٢٣

Editor's Note: Sunnism is primarily ritualistic while Sufism is primarily spiritualistic.[١٠] Shi'ism presents a balance between the ritual and the spiritual. As Nasr explains, "Sufism does not possess a shari'ah; it is only a spiritual way [tariqah] attached to a particular Shari'ite rite such as the Maliki or Shafi'i. Shi'ism possesses both a shari'ah and a tariqah" .((Sufi Essays ١٠٧

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

For the sake of concision and to avoid repeating what has already been explained, we will limit ourselves to recalling that in Shi'ism, the question of the Caliphate is eminently transcendental. As such, 'Ali's right to succession cannot, in any way, be subjected to human scrutiny. For Shi'ites, the supreme spiritual status of 'Ali is peerless and cannot be compared to the rank held by other Islamic leaders. He belongs to a unique and superior spiritual category which was conferred on him by the grace of God. By bestowing the wilayah of the Prophet on Ali, God perfected Islam and brought the prophetic mission to a .close

The fundamental doctrine of wilayah is based on the concept of the ta'alim of the Imams. What continues in Islam under the name of wilayah is, de facto et de iure [by fact and by right], a form of esoteric guidance [al-hidayah al-batiniyyah] from which humanity cannot stray without perishing.[١] The wilayah is the guaranteed living embodiment of the spiritual authority of the Prophet which, by the temporal succession of the Twelve Imams, continues throughout human history until the end of times. Understandably, it is impossible to separate the historical development of Shi'ite Islam from the meta-.historical antecedents of wilayah

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Ali's Islam cannot be separated from the metaphysical truths which are its telos, its' fundamental and final cause. In closing, it is inconceivable to claim that we have dealt with the issue of Imamate and wilayah in all of its depth. We have limited ourselves to addressing the issue of its origins and leaving the topic open to further research. As a result, this study on the origins of Shi'ism must remain incomplete for the time being. In order for it to be complete, it would have been necessary to compile some of the traditions that attest to the extraordinary importance of the secret spiritual life of Shi'ism and the Shi'ite ethos of the Hidden Imam, the seal of the Muhammadan wilayah, for, as the Prophet has stated, without the continuous living presence of the Imam, neither [human beings nor the world can subsit.[۲

Footnote

In the previous versions of this work published in Spanish, the author stated "[w]hat [۱] continues in Islam under the name of wilayah is, de facto et de iure [by fact and by right], a form or esoteric prophethood [nubuwwah batiniyyah]." What the author was attempting to convey was that the Shi'ism is the only expression of Islam which, in the words of Corbin, "has preserved and perpetuated the link of divine guidance between man and God through its belief in the Imamate" unlike Sunnism which "believes that the link between man and God has been severed with the end of the Prophethood" (qtd. Baqr al-Sadr, The Awaited Saviour). As Sayyid Rizvi has pointed out, however, the term "Esoteric Prophethood" for imamah and wilayah is problematic as it may lead readers to believe that Shi'ites beliveve in the continuation of nubuwwah. An Imam, after cessation of the prophethood, still has access to divine guidance through true visions and the voices of angels without actually seeing them [al-muhaddath], as explained in the section of al-Kafi which describes the Imams as al-muhaddathun. As per the suggestion of Sayyid Rizvi, the author has opted for the term al-hidayah al-batiniyyah which more aptly captures the .sense he was attempting to convey

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:Editor's Note: Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq said that [۲]

Amir al-Mu'minin is the gate of Allah, except through which one cannot reach Him, and the path to Him, such that if someone passes along another (path) he will perish, and this is applied to all the Imams, one after another. Allah has made them the pillars of the .(earth. (Kulayni ۸۸ hadith ۵۲۱

It is related in al-Kafi that Imam al-Sadiq was asked whether the world could exist without there being an Imam in it, to which he responded: "No" (Kulayni ۳۵: hadith ۴۴۷). The Imam is also reported to have said that "Verily, the world can never be without an Imam" (۳۶, hadith ۴۴۸), "As long as the world lasts, there will be in it a Proof of Allah" (۳۶: hadith ۴۴۹); "The earth can never last without an Imam who is Allah's proof for His creatures" (۳۷: hadith ۴۵۴). Muhammad al-Baqir also said that "If the Imam is removed from the earth (even) for an hour (of the day), the earth will surge up with those in it like a sea surges up .(with those in it" (۳۹: hadith ۴۵۸

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About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities in .religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes .of people interested in reading, with various formats in the cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

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spreading culture study in the publich-

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acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

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Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems, web- kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

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:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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